

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



**June 2017**

Vol. 122, No. 6

₹ 15.00

# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Steps to Realisation IV*

The next training is also a very difficult one. Niityanitya-Viveka—discriminating between that which is true and that which is untrue, between the eternal and the transitory. God alone is eternal, everything else is transitory. Everything dies; the angels die, men die, animals die, earths die, sun, moon, and stars, all die; everything undergoes constant change. The mountains of today were the oceans of yesterday and will be oceans tomorrow. Everything is in a state of flux. The whole universe is a mass of change. But there is One who never changes, and that is God; and the nearer we get to Him, the less will be the change for us, the less will nature be able to work on us; and when we reach Him, and stand with Him, we shall conquer nature. All knowledge is within us. All perfection is there already in the soul. But this perfection has been covered up by nature; layer after layer of nature is covering this purity of the soul. What have we to do? Really we do not develop our souls at all. What can develop the perfect? We simply take the evil off; and the soul manifests itself in its pristine purity, its natural, innate freedom. Now begins the inquiry: Why is this discipline so necessary? Because religion is not attained through the ears, nor through the eyes, nor yet through the brain. No scriptures can make us religion. We may study all the books that are in the world, yet we may not understand a word of religion or of God. We may talk



all our lives and yet may not be the better for it; we may be the most intellectual people the world ever saw, and yet we may not come to God at all. On the other hand, have you not seen what irreligious men have been produced from the most intellectual training? It is one of the evils of your Western civilization that you are after intellectual education alone, and take no care of the heart. It only makes men ten times more selfish, and that will be your destruction. When there is conflict between the heart and the brain, let the heart be followed, because intellect has only one state, reason, and within that, intellect works and cannot get beyond. It is the heart which takes one to the highest plane, which intellect can never reach; it goes beyond intellect, and reaches to what is called inspiration. Intellect can never become inspired; only the heart when it is enlightened, becomes inspired. An intellectual, heartless man never becomes an inspired man. It is always the heart that speaks in the man of love.

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From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.401-03.



**Vol. 122, No. 6**  
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**A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
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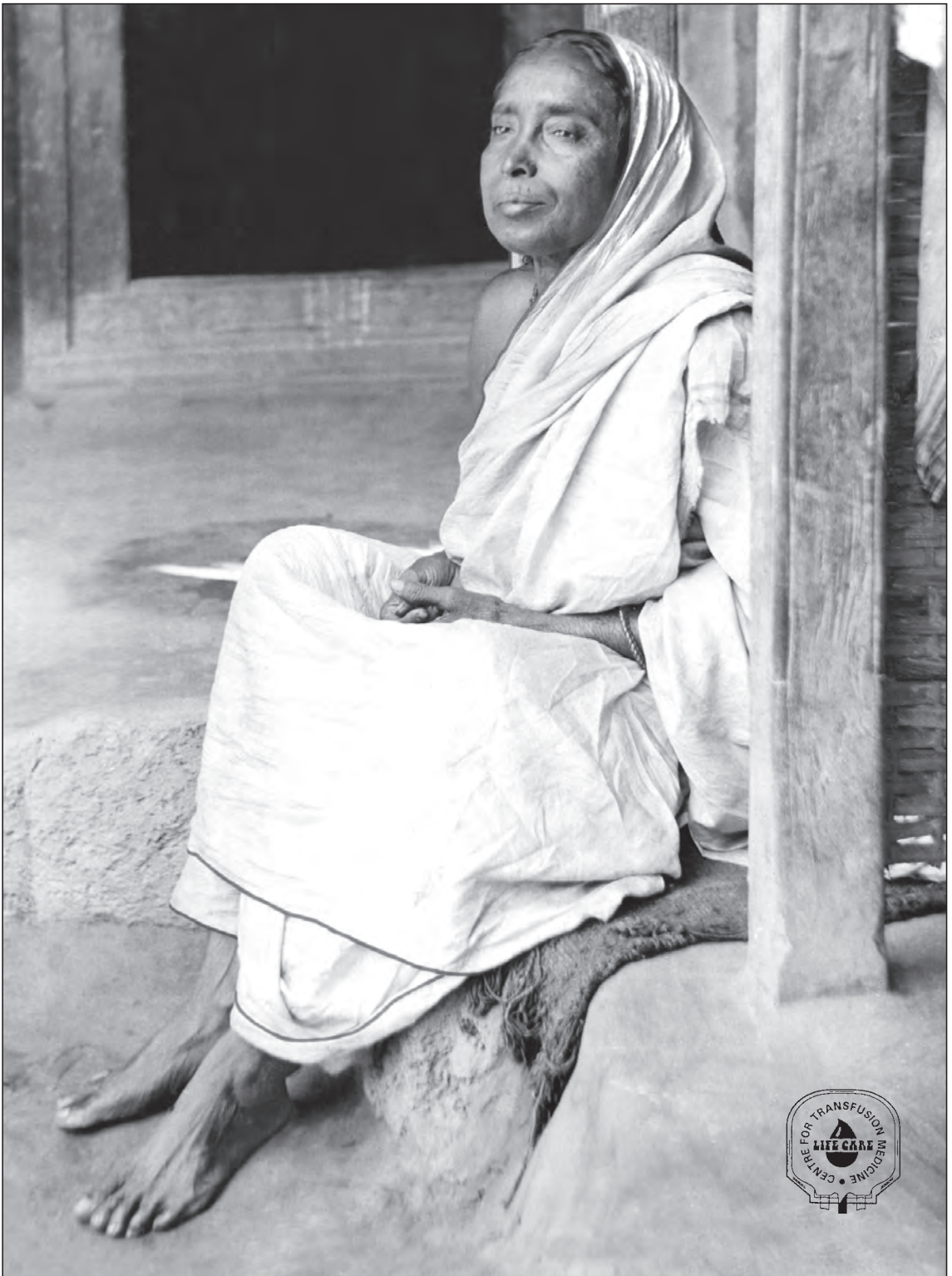
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### **Sankara Dig Vijaya**

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The book is an English translation of Madhava-Vidyaranya's traditional life of Sri Sankaracharya. It also has a profound and penetrating exposition of some of the moot points in Advaita metaphysics. It is translated by Swami Tapasyananda who was a Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order.



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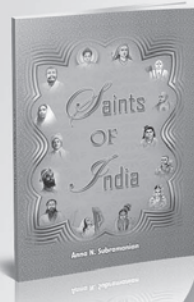
With colourful drawings and a simple and lucid English, the book presents the life of Sri Ramakrishna for young readers.



### **Saints Of India**

Pages: 208 Rs. 65/- Postage: Rs.30/-for single copy.

The book is a compilation of talks given to college students by Sri 'Anna' N.Subramanian. He was a householder-disciple of Swami Shivananda and served for many years in the Ramakrishna Mission educational institutions in Chennai.





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**Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass),  
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### **The Universal Temple of Bhagwan Shri Ramakrishna (Under Construction) An earnest Appeal for generous donations**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Please accept our greetings and best wishes.

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad located on Swami Vivekananda Marg (Beed Bypass) is a branch center affiliated to Headquarters, Belur Math (near Kolkata). This ashrama is conducting various service activities in the field of health, education, child welfare, as well as spreading spiritual message of eternal religion as propounded by Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

This ashrama has taken up a new project of erecting a temple of Shri Ramakrishna. The work was commenced in December 2009 and is expected to be completed by the end of 2017.

The temple will be a unique and imposing monumental structure of its kind in entire Marathwada region in general and Aurangabad city in particular. It will add a cultural and spiritual dimension to the historical city of Aurangabad. It will be a great attraction and a place for worship, prayer, meditation and inspiration for the local people. It is also expected that the good number of general public visiting Aurangabad city as tourists for visiting world heritage sites such as Ellora & Ajanta and pilgrims for visiting Ghrishneshwar Jyotirling, Shirdi, Paithan etc. will include visit to the temple in their itinerary. It is aimed for the benefit of one and all without distinction of caste, creed, and nationality.

The estimated cost of the entire project is Rs. 20 Crores. So far Rs. 15.00 Crores have been spent through public contribution. The balance amount of Rs. 05.00 Crores is needed to complete the construction of the Temple.

**We earnestly appeal to you to donate generously for this noble cause. Your support will indeed go a long way in our endeavor to erect this magnificent architectural edifice in the memory of Shri Ramakrishna who was the unique harmonizer of all the religions of the world and who dedicated his life to bring peace and welfare of mankind.**

**We value your help and co- operation immensely.**

Yours in the service of the Lord,

*Vishnupadananda*

**(Swami Vishnupadananda)**  
Secretary

<b>Temple Dimensions</b> : Length: 156 ft. Breadth: 076 ft. Height: 100 ft.
<b>Temple Construction Area</b> : 18000 Sq.ft.
<b>Garbhagriha</b> : 24ft. x 24ft.
<b>Temple Hall for Prayer and Meditation</b> : 70ft. x 40ft. Seating Capacity - 450
<b>Auditorium (Ground Floor)</b> : 80ft. x 57ft. Seating Capacity - 500
<b>The entire Temple will be built in Chunar sandstone and interior in Ambaji and Makarana marble. Ceiling of the Temple Hall will be done in Teak Wood</b>
<b>Estimated Cost : Rs. 20 Crores</b>



Model of the Proposed New Temple



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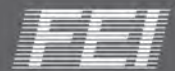
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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।  
**Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!**

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

June 2017  
Vol. 122, No. 6

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषद्

अथाव्याहृतं वा इदमासीत् स सत्यं प्रजापतिस्तपस्तप्त्वाऽनुव्याहरद् भूर्भुवःस्वरित्येषैवास्य प्रजापतेः  
स्थविष्ठा तनूर्या लोकवतीति स्वरित्यस्याः शिरो नाभिर्भुवो भृः पादा आदित्यश्चक्षुः । चक्षुरायत्ता  
हि पुरुषस्य महती मात्रा चक्षुषा ह्ययं मात्राश्चरति सत्यं वै चक्षुरक्षिण्यवस्थितो हि पुरुषः सर्वार्थेषु  
चरत्येतस्मात् भूर्भुवः स्वरित्युपासीतानेन हि प्रजापतिर्विश्वात्मा विश्वचक्षुरिवोपासितो भवतीत्येवं ह्याहैषा  
वै प्रजापतेर्विश्वभृत्तनूरेतस्यामिदं सर्वमन्तर्हितमस्मिन् सर्वस्मिन्नेषान्तर्हितेति तस्मादेषोपासीत ॥६.६॥

*Athavyahritam va idam-asit sa satyam prajapatis-tapas-taptva'nuvyaharad bhur-bhuvah svar-ity-eshavasya prajapateh sthavishta tanurya lokavatiti svar-ity-asyah shiro nabhir-bhuvo bhrih pada adityash-chakshuh. Chakshur-ayatta hi purushasya mahati matra chakshusha hyayam matrash-charati satyam vai chakshur-akshiny-avasthito hi purushah sarvartheshu charaty-etasmad bhur-bhuvah svar-ity-upasita-anena hi prajapatir-vishvatma vishva-chakshur-ivopasito bhavatiti-evam hy-ahaisha vai prajapater-vishva-bhrit-tanur-etasyam-idam sarvam-antarhitam-asmin-cha sarvasminn-asha-antar-hiteti tasmad-eshopasita* (6.6)

Now in the beginning this universe was, indeed, unspoken. Prajapati, who is real and the lord of creation, performed austerities and pronounced the words, *bhuh*, *bhuvah*, and *svah*. This universe is indeed Prajapati's most gross form. Its head is the sky, the navel is the atmosphere, the feet are the earth, the eye is the sun, for a person's great material world depends on the eye, for with the eye one measures all things. Indeed, the eye is the real for stationed in the eye a person moves about amongst all objects. Therefore, one should revere *bhuh*, *bhuvah*, and *svah*, for this Prajapati, the self of all, the eye of all, is revered by that. Thus it has been said: 'Indeed, this is the all-supporting form of Prajapati, for in it all this universe is hidden and it is hidden in this entire universe. Therefore, this is what one should revere.' (6.6)



# THIS MONTH

**W**HAT IS THE GOAL of karma yoga? How to accomplish it? What are the steps involved? What does karma mean in this context? These questions are answered in **Transcending Activity**.

A brief sketch of Sister Nivedita's marvellous life is presented by Swami Chetanananda, minister-in-charge of the Vedanta Society of St Louis, Missouri, in **Nivedita: A Great Wonder**.

Baruch Spinoza's philosophical and theological thoughts are compared with Vedanta in **God and World According to Spinoza and Vedanta** by Arun Chatterjee, Emeritus Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Prana is necessary for this universe to function. This is shown with an analysis of Swami Vivekananda's statements about it in **'Visualising' the Invisible Prana** by Tara Jane Paul, Assistant Professor of philosophy, University College, Thiruvananthapuram.

Swami Saradeshananda was an illumined beacon among the disciples of Sri Sarada Devi. His spiritual wisdom and insight have inspired the lives of countless spiritual aspirants. Swami Shuklatmananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Haridwar, served Swami Saradeshananda for ten years from 1978 to 1988 in Vrindavan. He shares with the readers his precious and blissful experiences in the holy company of Swami Saradeshananda in the second instalment of **Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradeshananda**.

Swami Sandarshananda, a monk at

Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata, in the sixth instalment of *Saga of Epic Proportions*, shows how Sister Nivedita proficiently grasped the sublimity of Indian culture and philosophy in a very short time despite coming from a completely alien culture and civilisation, being brought up in a completely different social environment. This became possible only because of her dedication to her guru, Swami Vivekananda.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Jnana**. Understanding this word is necessary to understand many discussions in Indian philosophy and also to understand the discipline of jnana yoga.

Truth always wins. Contrary to popular wisdom, one should not tell a lie even for saving a life. Constant holding on to the truth and practising a life of truthfulness can only lead a person to constant bliss. This is depicted in the story **Truth Prevails**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Justin E H Smith, University Professor of the history and philosophy of science at the Université Paris Diderot—Paris VII and the author of *Nature, Human Nature, and Human Difference: Race in Early Modern Philosophy* and *Divine Machines: Leibniz and the Sciences of Life* has written the book **The Philosopher: A History in Six Types**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

# *Transcending Activity*

**T**HE GENIUS OF Acharya Shankara was reflected in his bringing out the Bhagavad-gita from its obscurity of being hidden in the vast forest of words that is the Mahabharata. His wonderful commentary on the Gita gave it an important place, so much so that thereafter, anyone interested in studying Indian philosophy had to necessarily study the Gita, which is true even today. There are commentaries without number on this text.

Following in the footsteps of Shankara, Swami Vivekananda brought out four yogas from the Gita: karma yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, and jnana yoga. Through his masterly expositions on these yogas, he gave to the spiritual and philosophical world, treatises that double as manuals for following these disciplines, which are meant to manifest one's innate divinity. The goal of raja yoga is to achieve complete cessation of thoughts or mental activity. The goal of bhakti yoga is to attain supreme bhakti. The goal of jnana yoga is to attain supreme jnana. However, the goal of karma yoga is not to engage in maximum activity but to go beyond all activity. There is a great risk of misunderstanding this ideal of karma yoga and that is why Swamiji cautioned the aspirants and advised them to emphasise on being selfless while doing work.

The goal of spiritual life is self-abnegation. This can be achieved only by gradually effacing and eventually completely annihilating one's ego. Therefore, the goal of all four yogas that Swamiji expounded could only be the complete

destruction of the ego. In karma yoga, one has to do selfless work. This is imperative since all suffering is caused by the presence of two atti-

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**As long as one has the attitude of assertion or possession, one is bound to suffer.**

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tudes: the sense of doer-ship and the sense of enjoyer-ship. As long as one has either of these attitudes, that of assertion and possession, one is bound to suffer. By doing selfless work, one tries to get rid of the attachment one has to the results of a work. If one is not at all affected by the results of a work, then the sense of possession gradually fades and ceases to exist. If one is established in the practice of selfless work and does not expect any result, then one stops having ideas like 'This is mine', 'I have to acquire that', or 'That belonged to me once'. Thus, the idea of possession or the idea of enjoyer-ship is removed.

Even after the removal of the idea of possession, the idea that one has to perform some activity remains, albeit in a weak form. This arises out of the idea of assertion or the idea of doer-ship. The idea of doer-ship can be transcended only when one realises the futility of action or the vanity of thinking, 'I do this', 'I have to do this', or 'I did this'. To understand the fallacy of such thinking, one should understand when one can say that one has control over something: only when one has the power to make or mar something. In the present scenario, one can say that one has done something only if that person

could remain not doing it. In the case of karma yoga, one can say that one acts only when that person can remain without activity. But, can anyone remain activity?

To answer this question, we need to understand what activity or karma is. While Acharya Shankara takes karma to be the performance of Vedic rituals for the fulfilment of one's desires, by karma Swamiji means *any* activity, even breathing or thinking. If one were to take Swamiji's definition of karma, it is impossible for any living being to remain inactive. Sri Krishna also tells in the Gita that it is impossible for any living being to remain without work. He also says that it is Nature that propels living beings to indulge in activity. So, the problem lies in situating the agency of activity. If one thinks that one is the agent of activity, it would definitely cause suffering. One has to realise that the agency of activity is not in oneself but beyond.

The spiritual aspirant following the path of knowledge or Advaita should understand that this manifest universe is born out of ignorance and hence all activity has only an apparent existence and is unreal. In that case, the agency of activity would also be real and whatever one does would be the result of the actions one has done in the ignorance of thinking oneself to be the doer and the enjoyer. The spiritual aspirant following the path of devotion or a theistic tradition should understand that whatever one does is not done because of one's will or agency but because of the will or agency of the supreme Divine or God. Only by acknowledging the supremacy or the agency of God and by considering oneself as a mere instrument can a devotee engage in karma yoga and eventually transcend activity, as there is in reality nothing to do. Everything has been already done by God as Sri Krishna tells in the Gita and it is only apparently that living beings are acting

as not even a leaf can move without the will of God.

While practising karma yoga, one has to be very careful in giving up any kind of initiative. That can be done only when one is established in truthfulness. Otherwise, one can become insincere and label one's laziness and inertia as surrender to God. The litmus test to understand whether a work is being done due to one's initiative or not is to repeatedly check whether there is any desire in either the work or its outcome.

The follower of Advaita should understand that since the ultimate Reality, Brahman is beyond time, space, and causation, it is impossible for any action to take place. Since the knowledge of Brahman is already present and is not created by anything or any endeavour, but is uncovered by the removal of ignorance, it is imperative that one transcends activity, because it is very much within the domain of ignorance. All cognition and emotions are also within the realm of ignorance. Hence, the resolve to do any action, the steps taken to perform an action, and the differentiation of the person who does an action and the action that is performed, are all different manifestations of ignorance.

No amount of work can produce the knowledge of Brahman, because it would then mean that such knowledge can be caused by something and it would then become unreal. So, to understand the highest Reality, one has to rid oneself of all desires and ego. Only then would one understand that there is no work because there is no universe. To use the analogy of Sri Ramakrishna, just as a thorn is removed by another thorn, ignorance can be removed by endeavour. However, this endeavour should be focussed on the thought that one's true nature is beyond all activity.





# Nivedita: A Great Wonder

Swami Chetanananda

**T**ULASIDAS, A MEDIEVAL MYSTIC of India, said: ‘O Tulasi, when you came to this world, you cried and the world smiled. You do such things in your life that when you die, you will smile and let the world cry for you.’ I feel for Nivedita that way. She lived only forty-four years and her guru Swami Vivekananda lived only thirty-nine years. It seems to me that no great soul lives for a long time. They come with a mission, and when it is fulfilled, they depart. We are familiar with the speed of a bull-oak-cart, a rickshaw, a train, a car, a jet plane, a rocket—these souls move at rocket speed. Within a short time, they accomplish a tremendous amount of work. We find this in the lives of Nivedita and her guru, and their legacy overwhelms us. Swamiji said to a disciple: ‘As you have come into this world, leave some mark behind.’<sup>1</sup> Nivedita left her mark.

Nivedita’s name is now recorded in the pages of Indian history. There is very limited space in the golden boat of history; neither the rich nor the masses are granted entry there. Only those who have sacrificed their lives for the country and have given their all for their national heritage are allowed passage in that golden boat.

Nivedita’s life is really a wonder: She was an embodiment of energy, virility, strength, power, and fortitude. She was strong physically, mentally, intellectually, and spiritually. God gave her talent, and by the grace of her guru she employed it in various fields in her life.



Nivedita’s pre-monastic name was Margaret Elizabeth Noble. She was born on 28 October 1867 at Dungannon, a small town in Northern Ireland. Her ancestors had migrated from Scotland to Northern Ireland, where grandfather John Noble was a church minister. Her father Samuel Richmond also became a minister. He married Mary Isabel Hamilton and moved to Manchester, England, where the couple had three children: Margaret, May, and Richmond. After Samuel died in 1877 at age thirty-four, Mary and her three small children moved in with her father. Margaret and May joined Halifax School. Margaret was very serious and sincere about her studies. She was a brilliant student and finished her schooling at seventeen. To help her mother financially, she took a job at Keswick

Boarding School as a teacher. Afterwards she worked at a couple of other schools, and then started her own school in Wimbledon, a suburb of London. She became a supporter of the New Education movement in England, introducing Pestalozzi-Froebel's method of teaching there. From 1884 to 1894, Margaret spent ten years as a schoolteacher. She was a member of Sesame Club. She became well known among the literary elite, including Shaw, Keats, and Huxley.

Margaret's deep Christian upbringing could not satisfy her thirst for spirituality. She was an original freethinker and truth seeker. Although she loved Jesus, the faith-based Christian doctrines and dogmas created doubt in her rational and analytical mind. She began to study the life and philosophy of Buddha, which gave her some peace. As a fish on the ground flops and flounders, so Margaret's mind was restless for knowing the truth.

### Meeting with Swamiji

In October 1895 Swamiji came to London after his grand success in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He became well known in London as a 'Hindu Yogi' and the newspapers flashed the news. On 15 November Lady Isabel Margesson arranged for Swamiji to give a parlour-talk at her home and invited some of her friends. Margaret was among them. She wrote about her meetings with Swamiji in 1895 and 1896 in her book *The Master As I Saw Him*. In Swamiji's talks she heard something new, inspiring, and convincing: 'All our struggle is really for freedom. We seek neither misery nor happiness, but freedom' (8.250). 'Man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth' (1.17). 'It is very good to be born in a church, but it is very bad to die there' (4.42). She took notes to study Swamiji's teachings in depth. Her arid heart absorbed his wonderful message like a sponge. She later recorded her first impression: 'I

had recognized the heroic fibre of the man, and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people. But it was his *character* to which I had thus done obeisance.<sup>2</sup>

Swamiji stayed in London until 27 November 1895. During this period, he gave several lectures on Jnana Yoga that Margaret attended. She wrote about her impression of him that Swamiji spoke with a sense of conviction born out of a realisation which even an unbeliever could not deny. Margaret's doubt began to melt. Doubt is extremely painful to a sincere soul, like a tiny flying moth on the eye. A person cannot have rest until the moth is out. Margaret waited another few months for Swamiji's return. He returned in April 1896 to continue his lectures on *Jnana Yoga*, and he electrified the London audience. He said: 'What the world wants today, is twenty men and women who can dare to stand in the street yonder and say that they possess nothing but God. Who will go? ... Why should one fear?' (21). Margaret boldly accepted the challenge.

Margaret began to correspond with Swamiji. Swamiji wrote to Margaret on 7 June 1896:

Dear Miss Noble,

My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life. ...

Who will give the world light? Sacrifice in the past has been the Law, it will be, alas, for ages to come. The earth's bravest and best will have to sacrifice themselves for the good of many, for the welfare of all. Buddhas by the hundred are necessary with eternal love and pity.

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every world tell like thunderbolt. ... Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the

sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call.<sup>3</sup>

Inspired and overwhelmed, Margaret listened to this divine call and felt an urge to dedicate herself to a noble cause. One day during a conversation, Swamiji said to Margaret: 'I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me.'<sup>4</sup>

Later Nivedita wrote a letter to a friend from India: 'Suppose He had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless torso—for I always knew that I was waiting for something. I always said that a call would come. And it did.'<sup>5</sup> Margaret accepted Swamiji as her Master.

Swamiji travelled three months in Europe and then finally left for India from London on 16 December 1896, reaching there in February 1897. Margaret decided to join Swamiji in India and dedicate herself to help his mission. Swamiji wrote to her:

Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man but a woman—a real lioness—to work for the Indians, women specially. ...

Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.

Yet the difficulties are many. ... You must think well before you plunge in ... on my part I promise you, *I will stand by you unto death* whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it.<sup>6</sup>

### **Margaret in India with Swamiji**

Margaret left London and arrived in Calcutta on 28 January 1898 on the *SS Mombasa*. Swamiji received her at the port and escorted her to a devotee's house on Park Street, where Western visitors would stay. Margaret began to be acquainted with the place and people. Ramakrishna Math

was then at Nilambar's garden house in Belur. The Order had purchased an old house with land nearby, which is now Belur Math. In February 1898 Swami Saradananda returned from the West with Mrs Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod. Mrs Bull and Miss MacLeod renovated that house in Belur and moved into it. Margaret joined them. Every morning Swamiji would take breakfast with them and talk to them about his plan to work in India. Miss MacLeod asked: "Swamiji, how can I serve you best?" "Love India" was the answer.<sup>7</sup> Swamiji began to train Margaret, teaching her India's religion and culture, history, philosophy, scriptures, spiritual tradition, and so on. On 25 March 1898, Swamiji initiated Margaret into brahmacharya and gave her the name 'Nivedita', the dedicated one. He blessed her, saying, 'Go thou ... and follow Him, who was born and gave His life for others FIVE HUNDRED TIMES, before He attained the vision of the Buddha!'<sup>8</sup>

During that time it was not easy for Westerners to enter Hindu society because of rigidity of the caste system. Hindus were afraid that white people might seek to convert them to Christianity and they considered them *mlechhas*, untouchables. Swamiji wanted to engage Nivedita to educate Indian women. Therefore, he employed various methods to bring Nivedita into the mainstream Hindu society. First, he arranged for Nivedita to lecture at the Star Theatre on 'Influence of the Spiritual Thoughts of India in England' and invited the elite of the Calcutta society. She made a deep impression on them. Second, Swamiji taught the mystery of Kali worship to Nivedita and arranged for her to lecture on Kali at Kalighat, South Calcutta, which was a stronghold of Hindu society. Third, Swamiji introduced Nivedita, Sara Bull, and Josephine MacLeod to Holy Mother Sarada Devi. She received them cordially and had refreshment with them. The Holy Mother asked Nivedita: 'What



is your name?’ She replied: ‘Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble.’ With a smile, the Holy Mother said: ‘My child, I shall not be able to utter such a long name. I will call you *Khuki* [baby].’ When Swami Swarupananda translated this, Nivedita joyfully said: ‘Yes, yes, I am the Mother’s baby.’

Swamiji was overjoyed when he heard the story. When the orthodox people in Baghbazar learned that the Holy Mother had accepted Nivedita as her daughter, she became part of society. Fourth, during the plague epidemic in Calcutta, Nivedita was involved in the relief work. She cleaned the streets and nursed poor people in the slums. Her unselfish love and service conquered the hearts of the people. Fifth, she started a school for girls in Baghbazar according to the instruction of Swamiji and Holy Mother inaugurated it. Thus Nivedita became part of the Hindu society.

On 11 May 1898, Swamiji left for Nainital, Almora, and Kashmir accompanied by Nivedita, Mrs Bull, and Miss MacLeod. During this period, Swamiji incessantly trained Nivedita in Indian religion, culture, scriptures, epics, art, history, tradition, and so on. He even took Nivedita on that difficult pilgrimage to Amarnath Shiva in Kashmir that she described beautifully in her book, *The Master as I Saw Him*.

In June 1899, Swamiji travelled to the West, accompanied by Swami Turiyananda and Nivedita. During this voyage, Swamiji trained Nivedita day after day in her future work. Nivedita needed money for her school, so Swamiji introduced her to his friends and admirers in the US. After one and a half years, Swamiji returned to India, and Nivedita subsequently returned in February 1902. Nivedita continued to teach in her school and met Swamiji frequently. The morning after Swamiji died, on 4 July 1902, she rushed to Belur Math. She was shocked. The entry in her diary on 4 July 1902 was simply, ‘Swami died’.

### **Journey Alone**

In London, on 13 December 1896, Swamiji had said in his farewell address: ‘It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a disused garment. But I shall not cease to work! I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God.’<sup>9</sup> Those words rang in Nivedita’s ears. She wrote: ‘He is NOT dead ... He is with us always. I cannot even grieve. I only want to work.’<sup>10</sup> There is a great saying of Maurice Maeterlinck (1862–1949): ‘If you have been greatly influenced by anyone, prove it in your life, and not by your tears.’

Nivedita did not spend any time crying or lamenting for her guru. The spirit of her guru began to flow into her veins and she decided to carry his mission. Swamiji forecast about Nivedita: ‘India shall ring with her’ (1.511). She wrote: ‘My task is to awake a nation’ (1.482). She worshipped Mother India through her writings and speeches. She began a lecture tour in Bombay, Baroda, Nagpur, Madras, Patna, Lucknow, and various other cities in India. Nivedita was unhappy about how Indians were treated by their foreign rulers. Gradually she became involved with the Indian nationalist movement and came in close contact with Aurobindo, Gokhale, Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Gandhi, Bipin Pal, and Surendranath Banerjee, inspiring the young freedom fighters. As a result, she officially disconnected herself from the Ramakrishna Mission because its policy is to be free from politics. Nevertheless, she always signed her name: Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

Nivedita and Aurobindo planned the future course of the freedom movement in India. She regularly lectured at the Dawn Society and contributed to the *Dawn* magazine, which played an active role in the Swadeshi Movement. She wanted that the veritable fighter in the good cause should arise again with the

Bhagavadgita in the one hand and the sword in the other. The government put surveillance on her activities, but did not arrest her. Aurobindo was arrested, but was later released by C R Das. In 1907, when Swamiji's brother Bhupendra Nath Datta was arrested, Nivedita went to court, arranged to pay ten thousand rupees as bail, and had him released. *The Englishman* called her a traitor. She also arranged for Bhupendra to leave for America, so that he would not be arrested again. The British Government was trying to crush the freedom movement ruthlessly. The Nationalist leaders advised Nivedita to leave for England and work from there instead of being in Indian jail. She left for England and the United States in 1907, but continued to help the revolutionaries. When the situation calmed down, she returned to India in 1909 with Jagadish Chandra Bose and his wife.

Being endowed with God-given talent, unlimited energy, and the blessings of her guru, Nivedita became a source of inspiration to Indians in various important fields. In fact, she acted as an architect of Indian Renaissance. Bharat or India, became her living mother. She asked her students to repeat the words 'Bharat' and '*Vande Mataram*'. She helped the scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose in his research by collecting money and editing his books. She inspired historians such as Jadunath Sarkar and Radhakumud Mukherjee, and helped the economist Benoy Sarkar to write the social history of India. She edited *The History of Bengali Literature* written by Dinesh Sen. She regularly contributed articles and art reviews to the *Modern Review* magazine, which was edited by Ramananda Chatterjee. She appreciated the masterpieces of Indian paintings produced by Abanindranath Tagore, such as the 'Bharat Mata'. She sent Nandalal Bose, Asit Halder, and other modern

artists to Ajanta-Ellora to copy the frescoes in those caves, to recover the spiritual heritage of India. She herself travelled to Ajanta, Ellora, Agra, Delhi, Varanasi, Gaya, Nalanda, Chittoor, Jaipur, Udaipur, Udaygiri-Khandagiri and other places in order to study the beauty of Indian art and write articles on it.

Nivedita was a wonderful art critic. Her background knowledge of art and keen power of observation overwhelmed the artists. For example, one day Nivedita visited the Calcutta Art School and a young artist showed her his painting of Buddha. He asked her opinion. She commented: 'Why did you make the nose flat like the Chinese? Buddha was an Indian prince; he was not born with a flat nose. You are imitating the Chinese and Japanese style of art. Regarding beauty, the Indian forms are not less than Romans and Greeks.'<sup>11</sup>

Nandalal recalled:

Sister Nivedita came to our Art School. When she saw my portrait of Kali, she commented: 'Is this Kali? She should be naked, with no covering. You put a lot of clothes on her body. Read Swamiji's writings about Kali to understand how she should be depicted.'

When she saw my painting of Kaushalya fanning a grief-stricken Dasharatha with a palm-leaf fan, Sister remarked: 'My goodness! You have put a palm-leaf fan in the hand of a queen! Where did you get the idea? The queen should be holding an ivory fan. Go to the museum and see what an ivory fan looks like.'

I painted a portrait of Jagai and Madhai, two ruffians who tortured Chaitanya's disciples. Impressed, Sister said: 'It is beautiful. Where did you get the idea for the facial expression of these ruffians?' I replied, 'From Girish Ghosh.' Sister laughed and told me to meditate before drawing to bring life to the paintings.

I made a painting of Swami Vivekananda. When she saw it, she commented: 'This picture is not right. You have covered Swamiji's body with too many clothes. He never covered himself in that manner. Moreover, the climate is not suitable for that many coverings. Look at the image of Buddha. Is his body covered? Swamiji was like Buddha.'<sup>12</sup>

### **Some Glimpses of Nivedita**

Swami Bhumananda told this story about Nivedita's simplicity:

Holy Mother was then at 10/2 Bosepara Lane, where Nivedita visited her almost every day. She began to learn Bengali and wear a sari like Bengali women. She tied a bunch of keys in the upper corner of the sari, as others did, and placed this on her left shoulder. As she was not accustomed to this, the upper part of the sari slipped again and again, and she threw it back on the shoulder with a *jham jham* sound from the keys. The Mother remarked with a laugh: 'Her outside is white and inside is also white.' Then she mentioned that the Master said this. Curious, Nivedita asked when the Master said this. Then Holy Mother related: 'One day the Master was lying on his bed and I carried his food tray to his room. I noticed he was sleeping. I put the food on the floor and stood there silently. He opened his eyes and asked: 'Did you bring the food? You see, I went to a country where its inhabitants' outside is white and inside is also white.'

When Nivedita asked when this happened, the Mother mentioned an approximate Bengali era and the day of the Chariot Festival. Nivedita noted this down and went to Shashi Bhushan Ghosh, Sri Ramakrishna's disciple. He traced the Chariot Festival of the Bengali era corresponding to an English year and date from the almanac. Nivedita brought that information to her house and found in her diary that on the same day she had seen the Master in a dream.

After many years, when Swamiji came to London, Nivedita saw the Master's picture from him and was overwhelmed that she had seen him in a dream long ago. After Nivedita told her story to the Holy Mother, she replied: 'You are Naren's daughter, so the Master appeared before you.'<sup>13</sup>

Saralabala Sarkar wrote in her memoirs:

It was painful to observe that Nivedita could not see the image of the Kali in Dakshineswar because she was a Christian and a Westerner. She would stand in the courtyard and try to visualise the Mother. Alas, how many Hindus are as devoted to Kali as Nivedita was?<sup>14</sup>

Nivedita's residence-cum-school was at 17 Bosepara Lane. There was no electricity. In addition to teaching in the school, Sister spent most of her time busy writing books, which would bring revenue to the school. Sister suffered terribly during the hot summer days. Sometimes she would come out of her room and tell her colleagues in Bengali: '*Mathai boro koshto*—terrible pain in my head.' However, she would set aside her physical discomfort and return to work (84).

Nivedita taught Indian history twice a week with great enthusiasm and passion. One day she described the history of Rajputana and shared her own experience in Chittoor: 'I climbed to the top of the hill, knelt down on a rock, closed my eyes, and began to think of Queen Padmini.' At that, she sat down, closed her eyes, and folded her hands. Her facial expression beggared description. Nivedita continued: 'Devi Padmini was standing with folded hands, facing the blazing fire. I was trying to imagine Padmini's last thought before she jumped into the fire to avoid surrendering to the Muslim king. How wonderful was her chastity! It was beautiful.' With that, Nivedita remained in silence with closed eyes in front of her students. The class was over (88).

Nivedita's love for and faith in Sri



Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swamiji were phenomenal. She would talk about her guru to her students: 'My guru was Vireshvar. He was a god for heroes. The heroes of the world must follow in his footsteps. You all must be heroes and overcome this little happiness and misery of the world.' In the girls' classroom, there was a world map on one wall and a picture of Sri Ramakrishna on the other wall. Nivedita took the world map, put it below Sri Ramakrishna's picture and said: 'Sri Ramakrishna was a teacher of the world, so the world map should be below his feet (95).

One day Nivedita saw that the maidservant had affixed cow dung patties to the outside wall of the Holy Mother's house, which was a holy temple to her. She told the Holy Mother's attendants that this should not be done. However, a few days later the maidservant did the same thing, which made Nivedita annoyed. She wrote a postcard to Brahmachari Ganen: 'Please tell the maid that she should not do it anymore. Never! Never! Never!!! Furious "N"'.<sup>15</sup> This little incident shows how much love she had for the Holy Mother.

Navadurga Basu, a student of Nivedita, reminisced: 'I have seen Sister waving the incense before the picture of Swamiji with great devotion, and then start her class in the school.'<sup>16</sup>

Nirjharini Sarkar, another student of Nivedita, reminisced:

The class took place on the floor; we sat on a mat, and there was a low desk in front. Sister told the students to always sit erect. Once, Sister took us to the museum. She had brought a big package of dried fruits in the horse carriage. After the tour, she asked Prafulladi to distribute the fruits to the students. She did so, giving some to Sister also. When Sister learned that Prafulladi had not kept any for herself, she was moved and remarked with a sweet smile: 'This is natural for the girls in this country. They are always busy serving others without keeping anything for themselves.'

She had tremendous feeling for the poor people. Some workers were painting a room in the museum and a tired worker was sleeping on the floor. Sister asked us not to make any noise and disturb his sleep. However, that worker awoke and, seeing a white woman, he hurriedly got up and fearfully saluted Sister, saying, 'Memshab'. Sister was embarrassed and requested him to go back to sleep. I can still visualise Sister's compassionate face.<sup>17</sup>

In 1998, there was a plague epidemic in North Calcutta. The monks of the Ramakrishna Order and Nivedita got involved in plague relief. During the plague the compassionate figure of Nivedita was seen in every slum of the Baghbazar locality. She helped others with money without giving a thought to her own condition: Of milk and fruits which were her diet, she gave up milk to meet the medical expenses of a patient. Dr R G Kar left this eyewitness account about Nivedita:

I asked her to take precautions. When I went to visit the patient again in the afternoon I saw Sister Nivedita sitting with the child in her lap in the damp and weather-beaten hut in that unhealthy locality. Day in and day out, night after night, she remained engaged in nursing the child in that hut, having abandoned her own house. When the hut was to be disinfected, she took a small ladder and began whitewashing the walls herself. ... After two days, the child lay in Eternal sleep in the affectionate lap of the merciful lady.<sup>18</sup>

Ramananda Chatterjee narrated two touching incidents that showed Nivedita's loving heart for all:

Once I went to see her at Dum Dum, at the residence of Jagadish Bose. I had an early lunch and reached there at their lunchtime. As soon as she heard of my arrival, she came out and asked someone to feed the driver. She told the driver

to feed the horses and to give them rest. Then she offered tea to me and we had a long conversation about the publication work. I was moved by her compassion for the horses.

Another time, I was passing through Sukhia Street in North Calcutta when I noticed Nivedita in another carriage. She saw a puppy dog gasping on the footpath. She immediately stopped the carriage, bought some milk from a shop, and fed the dog to save its life.<sup>19</sup>

### **Nivedita in the Eyes of Her Contemporaries**

Nivedita was glorified by poets, scientists, artists, writers, national leaders, journalists, and many Indian and foreign savants. We shall briefly mention a few appreciations here.

Rabindranath Tagore said about her: 'She had a versatile, all-round genius, and with that there was another thing in her nature—that was her militancy. She had power, and she exerted that power with full force on the lives of others. I have not noticed in any other human being the wonderful power that was hers of absolute dedication of herself. ... She was in fact a *lokamata*, a Mother of the People.'<sup>20</sup>

G K Gokhale, a national leader said: 'Her marvellous intellect, her lyric powers of expression, her great industry, the intensity with which she held her beliefs and convictions, and last but not the least, that truly great gift—capacity to see the soul of things straightaway—all these would have made her a most remarkable woman of any time and in any country' (86).

Aurobindo said: 'She was a veritable live wire' (54).

Subhash Chandra Bose said to Dilip Roy: 'Those who try to denigrate our country because of thousand disgraceful oppressions, I ask them to read *The Master as I Saw Him*. I do not know of any other disciple as great as Nivedita, nor any other guru as great as Swamiji' (55).

Abanindranath Tagore said: 'I saw her at a party of the Art Society at Justice Homewood's house. I was given the charge of sending out invitations. I had sent an invitation to Nivedita also. The party had begun. The whole place was crowded with so many rich people. Many well-dressed beautiful ladies were there. Nivedita came late in the evening. The same white dress, the rosary of Rudraksha beads round her neck and her brown hair tied in high knot. When she came and stood there it seemed as if the moon had arisen among the stars. In a moment all the beautiful women paled into insignificance. The men started whispering. Woodroffe came and asked who she was. I introduced him to Nivedita. I do not know whom you would call beautiful; to me she is the ideal.'<sup>21</sup>

S K Ratcliffe, editor of *The Statesman*, wrote: 'The land to whose service she had devoted herself made her overwhelming appeal to her—its history and thought, its people and their life, its present state in subjection and social transition. There could be no partial surrender with her: she gave herself utterly.'<sup>22</sup>

### **Nivedita: A Great Wonder**

We are amazed when we see the Taj Mahal in India, the Pyramids in Egypt, and the Great wall in China. We wonder how it is possible to build all these great things. Similarly, we are in wonder as we witness the legacy of Nivedita in various fields of Indian national life. She lived and worked in India for approximately nine years of the forty-four years of her lifetime! Nivedita is no more with us but her powerful writings make her immortal. Apart from her voluminous writings and letters, *The Master as I Saw Him*, *The Web of Indian Life*, and *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* are her masterpieces. There are three English biographies and several Bengali biographies. In recent times Sankari Prasad Basu

wrote *Lokamata Nivedita* in five volumes, which revealed various facets of Nivedita.

Nivedita fell on India like a luminous comet from a different planet and awakened the Indian people from their moribund condition through her divine power and unselfish love. She worked in the fields of religion, politics, nationalism, art, literature, science, education, journalism, and more. She was a genius with an encyclopaedic knowledge. Nivedita became the moving figure in the renaissance of India.


During 12–15 September 2016, I went to Darjeeling to visit Roy Villa, which is now a branch of the Ramakrishna Mission. I stayed in a room adjacent to Nivedita's, where on 13 October 1911 she breathed her last from blood dysentery. On 14 September I went to visit the spot where Nivedita was cremated. A monument and her statue had been installed there. There is an inscription on the monument: 'Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India.' Before her death she had made her will and bequeathed all of her money and all of the income from her books to her school for women's education.

Abala Bose recalled: 'During her last moment, she prayed: "O Lord, lead us from the unreal to the real, darkness to light, and death to immortality." Finally, her face became luminous and she uttered: "The boat is sinking but I shall see the sunrise." Thus Nivedita merged into light divine.'

Nivedita's ashes were brought to Belur Math and installed in a niche of her guru, Swamiji's shrine. Every morning in Belur Math a monk offers flowers to her relics.

With lightning speed news of her death spread all over India. Mother India lost a wonderful, glorious, and dedicated daughter. Nivedita's spirit began to travel in the veins of million Indians. When Holy Mother heard the news, she cried and remarked: 'All people cry for a great soul. ... Nivedita once said to me: "Mother, we were Hindus

in our previous births. We are born in the West so that the Master's message may spread there."<sup>23</sup>

Nivedita left a mark on this earth and justified her name: 'Nivedita—the dedicated one.' 

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*Monument of Spinoza in Amsterdam*

## ***God and World According to Spinoza and Vedanta***

**Arun Chatterjee**

**M**OST PEOPLE IN Western and Eastern societies believe in God; however, their concepts or ideas of God and his relation with the world are not alike. I will use the word 'world' in the sense of the phenomenal world, which includes the entire universe of which both the earth and its inhabitants are a part. This is the world insofar as it is perceptible and scientifically comprehensible to us as human beings. Many people accept the views of scriptures, which describe the glory of God, while philosophers debate on the existence of God and his characteristics. This article will not deal with the proofs for and against the existence of God, and it will begin with the premise that God exists and present the views about God as held by a few different theologies and philosophies of different cultures. The focus of the article will be on the views of Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) on God's characteristics or attributes

and his relation with the phenomenal world. One question to be examined is whether God is immaterial or whether he has both immaterial and material attributes. Other issues to be examined are God's transcendence and immanence with respect to the world and whether God is personal or impersonal. I should point out that Spinoza's philosophy covers a wide range of topics and issues such as freedom, causality, knowledge, emotions, virtue, happiness, and so on. This article's scope will be limited to only the nature of God and God's relation with the world.

In addition to Spinoza's own views I will present the prevailing theological and philosophical views of the West during his time to provide a background since his views were very different from his predecessors. I will also present a brief comparison of Spinoza's views with those of Vedanta, which is the most prominent school of Hindu philosophy. Views of Vedanta will be

presented immediately following Spinoza's views on each question and issue that will be examined.

### **Western Theology and Philosophy in Spinoza's Time**

For Western theology I will review the traditional Judeo-Christian views of God and the world, and for Western philosophy I will present very briefly the views of the famous philosophers Aristotle (384–22 BCE) and Rene Descartes (1596–1650 CE) who influenced Spinoza's thinking.

The views of Judaism and Christianity on God and the world are dualistic. The dualism shows up at two levels. At one level dualism deals the relation of God with the world, and at another level it deals with the relation of mind or soul, with body. With regard to God's relation with the world Judaism and Christianity believe that God is the creator of the world and stands apart from it although God is not aloof. This view is found in Islam also. In Judaism and Christianity there are two views regarding the process of creation of the world. According to one view God created the world out of pre-existing matter and the other view is that God created the world out of nothing, *creatio ex nihilo*. In either case there is an absolute distinction between God and God's creation. In addition it is generally believed that God is immaterial whereas the created world is material. With regard to dualism at the level of the world and its inhabitants it is widely believed in the West that all the objects of the world including the body of human beings are made of matter, but the soul is immaterial and separable from the body. Soul in this context includes at least some aspects of mind and frequently a body's life-force also. According to the Old Testament God breathes life into the body of a person at the time of birth, and this view is expressed thus: 'And the LORD God formed man

of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.'<sup>1</sup>

Both Judaism and Christianity accept this view even if not always in completely literal terms. Thus at the world level the body and soul of human beings are, or are made of two different substances. It is also not generally believed that the substance of human soul is, or is part of, the divine substance of God, if God can be said to have a substance. Thus human being can come close to God but can never unite or merge with God. In metaphysical terms the traditional view of Judaism and Christianity does not accept the immanence of God in the world, and instead it emphasises the transcendence of God. It should be acknowledged that there are a few exceptions within these religions since some of the mystical schools of these religions such as Kabbalah of Judaism and Sufism of Islam do not accept the absolute separation and difference between God and human being.

Another important aspect of Judaic-Christian and Islamic view of God is that God is a person. This concept is clearly implied in both Old and New Testaments and also Koran. Common persons of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths view God as an omniscient and omnipotent person, and they believe that there is a reciprocal relation between God and human beings. A personal God is not aloof from God creation, and God responds to human prayers. A personal God also expects human beings to love God and obey God's dictates.

I mentioned earlier that the famous philosophers Aristotle and Rene Descartes influenced Spinoza's thinking. Moses Maimonides (1135–1204 CE), a Jewish philosopher, also had considerable influence on Spinoza. However, Spinoza did not agree with their views completely. Aristotle did not accept the dualism of Plato, which

separates abstract ‘forms’ of individual things of the world from the concrete things themselves. For Aristotle matter and form of individual things are inseparable and form is immanent in matter as the essence of a thing made out of that matter. It seems that Aristotle made an exception with regard to the form of intellectual activity, which is immanent within a living human being engaged in such activity and also seems to have an eternal existence apart from the matter of that being.

According to Aristotle both matter and form were pre-existing and when the world came into being these two came together to form the composite substance of living things of the world. For Aristotle God is separate from the world. God is pure actuality and immaterial, and is different from the substance of things of the world although God is its final cause. Aristotle referred to God as the ‘unmoved mover’ of the motion, that is, causal changes, of the world. God set the world in motion and caused the potentiality hidden in the substance of the world to become actuality. Another noteworthy feature of Aristotle’s concept of God is that God does not have personality, and this concept is contrary to the views of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which portray God as a person who is to be loved and worshipped.

Descartes is considered by many as the father of modern philosophy. He believed that God is immutable and immaterial, and that God created a mutable world of matter and minds. It is frequently said that according to Descartes bodies and minds are made of two different substances—bodies are made of corporeal substance or matter, and minds are made of incorporeal substance. However, it is more accurate to say that minds *are* incorporeal ‘substances’ for Descartes. They are substances in the sense that they can only possibly exist if God creates them individually, and they can only cease to exist if God no longer continues them in existence.

The matter of which bodies are composed and all individual minds are created substances, and this metaphysical view is a form of what is known as substance dualism. However, it is difficult to understand how Descartes thinks about minds, if he does not think of them as made out of any substance. According to some scholars, Descartes thinks of minds as composed of nothing but mental activity or thinking. In any case he says that mental activity or thinking is their ‘essence’. Further, it is not clear whether God can be said to be made of any substance for Descartes. However, if he is, then that substance is different from any other substance. Descartes describes the essence or principal attribute of God as ‘infinite perfection’, which includes omniscience and omnipotence.

### ***Spinoza’s Philosophy of God and Vedanta’s***

Spinoza was a Jew of Spanish descent, and he lived in Amsterdam in Netherlands. He presented a very different view of God from the traditional Western theology and philosophy. His view was considered so radically different from the prevalent view of Judaism about God that he was excommunicated from the Jewish community of Amsterdam. In this section I will review the major elements of Spinoza’s view related to God and point out those elements or concepts that are very different from those of his time. I also will compare Spinoza’s view with that of Vedanta. In a latter section I will discuss his view on God’s relation with the world.

### ***Metaphysical Monism***

The widely accepted view prevailing at the time of Spinoza was that the world, which is created by God, is made of two different substances—matter and mind, and that these substances are different from the immaterial substance of God.



Spinoza did not accept this dualistic view of different substances. He believed that there is only one substance, which is God. In part one of his famous book, *Ethics*, he presented in a systematic way the definitions and propositions of terms and concepts related to God and the world.<sup>2</sup> I will present only a few selected definitions and propositions from the *Ethics* and also provide some explanation. I will compare some of these concepts with those of Vedanta.

Spinoza defines God as follows in 'Definitions' section of the first part of *Ethics*:

1.6: By God I mean an absolutely infinite Being; that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence.

1.3: By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it has to be formed.

Following these definitions of God and substance Spinoza presented many 'Propositions', and the following pertain to God and the world.

1.7: Existence belongs to the nature of substance.

1.14: There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God.

1.15: Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God.

It can be concluded from the above definitions and propositions that Spinoza believed in metaphysical monism according to which Reality is composed of only one substance, which was called God by Spinoza. He also believed that God is self-caused, *causa sui* and independent whereas everything else is dependent on God. This monistic view is in sharp contrast with the Judaic-Christian theology's dualistic concept of God and the world. It also is different from the views of most Western philosophers who

believed in two or more substances. Further, Spinoza disagreed with Western theology and philosophy of his time as to the characteristics of God. I will discuss a few of these characteristics, which are the materiality of God, the impersonal character of God and natural laws.

### **Vedanta's View on Monism**

Spinoza's monism is compatible with the view of Vedanta. There is a famous verse in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*: 'Verily, this whole world is Brahman.'<sup>3</sup> The ultimate Reality in Vedanta philosophy is Brahman and in its highest status Brahman is indeterminable. However, with reference to the manifested world it takes the poise of Atman or Self, which becomes the inner essence or substance of everything that exists. Spinoza's Substance is very similar to Vedanta's Atman.

### **Materiality of God**

Traditional theology and philosophy of the West consider God as purely immaterial and treats the world as material. They consider God to be the efficient cause of the universe and they also proclaim God's omnipresence in the world, but they deny that God has any material aspects or attributes. This view naturally raises the question: 'How can an immaterial God create a material world?' A few theologians and philosophers who preceded Spinoza believed that matter was pre-existent. Christianity believes that matter was created out of nothing, *ex nihilo*. Both these views can be questioned. Even if we accept that matter was pre-existent, can we not still ask how an immaterial God could form a universe, or a world, out of that matter? The claim that matter was 'created out of nothing' also is very difficult for many to accept since it goes against all principles of science. Spinoza could not accept either of these views.

Spinoza's view about the God's materiality

is daringly different from prevailing views of his time. He declared in Proposition 1.14 of the *Ethics*: 'There can be, or be conceived, no other substance but God.' He also believed that the world is an emanation of God, or an emanation of the essence of God; so the materiality of the world must come from God's own substance. Spinoza also said in Proposition 1.11 that 'God or substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists', and according to him two of these attributes can be known by human intellect. These two knowable attributes of Substance are 'extension' and 'thought'. Spinoza's term 'extension' represents 'matter', and his 'thought' represents 'mind'. Spinoza's view that extension and thought are attributes of God, or substance, leads to the conclusion that everything within the universe has both material and immaterial aspects.

### **Vedanta's View on Materiality**

Vedanta philosophy agrees with Spinoza on the question of materiality of God as it recognises that the matter comes from the ultimate Reality, Brahman. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: 'He knew that food is Brahman.'<sup>4</sup> This is meant to say that matter is an attribute of Brahman. According to Vedanta, mind or consciousness, also is an attribute or power of Brahman. In the process of self-manifestation matter emerges from Brahman.

### **Personality of God and Love of God**

Traditional religions emphasise the personal aspect of God. For them God has emotions and human beings can have a reciprocal relation with God. God expects human beings to love God and follow God's dictates, and in return God also loves them. Traditional religions also believe that God rewards and punishes human beings after they die according to their actions in life. In contrast to these traditional views Spinoza believed that

God is an impersonal entity with no emotions and also that God does not love or hate anyone. These views are presented in Proposition 5.17: 'God is without passive emotions, and he is not affected with any emotion of pleasure and pain.' The corollary of this Proposition says: 'Strictly speaking God does not love or hate anyone.'

It is interesting that despite his proclaiming God's impersonality Spinoza wrote about a man's 'intellectual love of God', which is a famous expression of Spinoza's philosophy. Spinoza discussed at length various levels or grades of knowledge. At the lowest level is the knowledge based on sense-perception, which yields superfluous knowledge of particular things. At the highest level is the knowledge that perceives the essence of particular things and develops a clear understanding about them. This knowledge helps us understand that particular things are in God and conceived through God. The clear understanding of particular things leads to an understanding of God and the idea of God as cause.<sup>5</sup> According to Spinoza this type of understanding is the highest level of knowledge and he called it the third kind of knowledge. In Proposition 5.27 he wrote: 'From this third kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible content of mind.' Then in the Corollary of Proposition 5.32 he wrote: 'From the third kind of knowledge there necessarily arises the intellectual love of God.' This love is directed to God and it consists not of joy or passion, but blessedness itself.

### **Vedanta's View on God's Personality**

The issue of God having personality or not was debated vigorously by some of the great scholars of the past, who interpreted the original sources of Vedanta philosophy differently. Based on the differences in their views three different major schools of Vedanta were formed, and each had

considerable following. For Advaita or non-dual Vedanta of Acharya Shankara the ultimate Reality is Brahman, which is impersonal, without any personal qualities, *nirguna*. The impersonality of Brahman is considered by this school as the supreme truth. However, Shankara recognised that as long as one lives in ignorance, one would believe in a personal God with qualities, *saguna*. The other two major schools of Vedanta did not accept Shankara's view that God can be impersonal. Both these schools recognised that the highest Reality is God with personality, Ishvara and emphasised devotional spiritual practices, which are very popular among Hindus. In the Gita, the supreme Person has been described as free from qualities yet enjoyer of qualities.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of impersonal Brahman dominated early Upanishads, but references to a personal God can be found in later Upanishads such as *Shvetashvatara Upanishad*. In the Gita, God as Krishna is a person and a friend of Arjuna and all human beings, and he encourages men in distress to come to him for shelter and protection. This personal aspect of God is lacking in Spinoza's philosophy. As I mentioned earlier Spinoza wrote about 'intellectual love', which a person of a high level of knowledge has toward God. However, there is no suggestion in Spinoza's philosophy that God loves anybody.

Vedanta agrees with Spinoza's view that right kind of knowledge leads to love of God. The Gita addresses this issue in depth. The spiritual

*Spinoza and the Rabbis*





practices discussed in the Gita include three paths for finding God. These are the path of knowledge, the path of action, and the path of devotion, which includes love and adoration. The path of knowledge involves the understanding of the oneness in the world and also understanding that the essence of everything is Brahman, the ultimate Reality. According to the Gita, knowledge leads to love and also that knowledge combined with love and adoration of God is the best approach. The following verse is one of several verses in the Gita that present this view: 'Of those the person with knowledge, who is ever in constant union with the Divine, whose devotion is all concentrated on him, is the best. The person of knowledge is dear to me, and I am dear to him' (7.17).

### **Relation of God with the World: Immanence and Transcendence**

In the beginning of this section I will examine Spinoza's views related to the manifestation or emanation of the world. Then I will address the issue of God's immanence and transcendence with regard to the world.

### **Manifestation or Emanation of the World, Its Purpose, and Free Will**

The common view of Western theologians and philosophers of Spinoza's time and earlier was that God created the world out of nothing or from pre-existing matter and in either case world's substance is non-divine, that is, different from God. As I mentioned earlier, Spinoza could not accept this view. He repeatedly wrote that there cannot be more than one substance. He wrote in Proposition 1.25: 'God is the efficient cause not only of the existence of things but also of their essence.' In Proposition 1.15 Spinoza wrote: 'God is the immanent, not transitive, cause of all things.' These two propositions

indicate that God is the efficient cause and also the inner essence or inner being of the world. That means that the world and everything in it in some way expresses God's being. The world is not a creation but an emanation of God.

A pertinent question related to God and the world is: is there any purpose for the existence of the world? Another question is: could the world have existed in another way? Spinoza believed that there is no hidden plan or goal for the existence of the world. He also believed that God does not have free will. Spinoza wrote in Proposition 1.29: 'Nothing in nature is contingent, but all things are from the necessity of the divine nature determined to exist and to act in a definite way.' In Proposition 1.33, he wrote: 'Things could not have been produced by God in any other way or in any other order than is the case.' Thus, God acts by the necessity of own nature and is incapable of changing the course of actions and this means that whatever exists is how it must be. The view of Spinoza that God acts by necessity of own nature and does not have free will is very different from the views of traditional religions.

Another interesting concept of Spinoza's philosophy is related to free will and determinism with regard to the operation of the world and its inhabitants. According to Spinoza all events in the world are components of a causal chain in which everything happens necessarily as it does. From this it follows that human beings do not have any free will; their acts in the world are causally related and determined by God's nature, but not by any kind of divine will.

### **Vedanta's Views on Manifestation**

The concept of manifestation of the phenomenal world as opposed to creation is fundamental for Vedanta and so Vedanta is in agreement with Spinoza on this issue. The following verse of the *Mundaka Upanishad* uses the example of

a spider and how it spins its thread and makes a web to illustrate how God manifested the phenomenal world out of itself: 'As a spider creates and withdraws its thread or web, as herbs grow on earth, as the hair grows on the head and the body of a living person, so from the Imperishable arises here the universe.'<sup>7</sup>

However, apart from any question as to how literally we should take such metaphors; there is a difference between Spinoza's views and those of Vedanta as to the purpose of manifestation. For Spinoza, God manifested the world from the necessity of his own Nature. Vedanta does not agree with this view. There are different views within Vedanta as to why the ultimate Reality, Brahman, manifested the world. The Vedanta philosophy of Shankara does not accept the world as truly real, but it fails to explain why the world came into being even at an illusory level if the goal of human life should be to get out of it and merge with Brahman. The schools of Vedanta belonging to Ramanuja and Madhva believe that the manifestation is real and it is for the sport or play, *lila*, of God. Contemporary scholars of Vedanta such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo believe in teleology of the manifestation. They believe in spiritual evolution, that is, evolution of consciousness that would lead to the development of higher levels on consciousness in human beings and the establishment of more harmonious communities.

With reference to Spinoza's view on free will and determinism, which I discussed earlier very briefly, I should point out that Vedanta admits determinism in the form of the doctrine of karma according to which a person's actions are components of a chain of causes and effects. This view is compatible with that of Spinoza. However, Vedanta also admits the freedom of choice or free will. Vedanta believes that although most events and the actions of persons

occur *necessarily*, a person can have free will if he is highly conscious and aware of his choices and their consequences. I have discussed this issue of free will and determinism in depth in another article.<sup>8</sup>

### God's Immanence and Transcendence

A common interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy is that his God is identical to Nature, that is, in the sense of the phenomenal world and nothing more; this concept is commonly known as pantheism. However, even though this view allows that the phenomenal world may have aspects or dimensions not evident to either ordinary perception or even to the understanding of natural science, some scholars believe that this interpretation is still not correct, and I will present their arguments.

Spinoza followed medieval thinkers in distinguishing between *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata*, and to understand Spinoza's metaphysics it is necessary to know clearly how he understood and used these two expressions. The first expression, *Natura Naturans*, literally means 'nature naturing', or nature qua actively expressing; it is the inner essence of whatever is or happens. In the *Scholium* of Proposition 1.29, Spinoza referred to it as 'God in so far as he is considered a free cause'. This means that God or *Natura Naturans* is not determined by anything but itself. It is a creative or productive principle that is eternally producing what Spinoza calls infinitely many 'modes', or 'modifications', and also sustains them.

*Natura Naturata* literally means 'nature natured', and in Spinoza's own words it is 'all that follows from the necessity of God's nature' in the *Scholium* of Proposition 1.29. It thus refers to the manifested Nature, which includes all modes. *Natura Naturata* is thus seemingly not identical to *Natura Naturans* and Spinoza describes it, or

at least everything within it, as something that can only be conceived as *in* God. Even though they are seemingly not identical Spinoza frequently writes as if his God in some sense 'is' both *Natura Naturans* and *Natura Naturata*. Insofar as God is more than *Natura Naturata*, it can be argued that God in some sense transcends the world. In this sense, in Wolfson's words, 'Spinoza's substance is thus a whole transcending the universe, the latter being the sum of the modes'.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, since it is expressing or 'naturing', itself in all modes as the inner essence, God as substance is also immanent in the world.

It should be emphasised that Spinoza's God is not transcendent in the sense that God is separate from the modes, even if in some way distinct from them. He is not a creator who stands apart from his creation. He is transcendent and immanent with respect to the phenomenal world simultaneously. There is an ontological unity between God and the world of modes.

There are two other reasons for making the case that Spinoza's God has a transcendent aspect. First, Spinoza argued that there must be an infinite number of attributes of God, even if only two of those—thought and extension—are expressed in the Nature, which is the world insofar as it is perceptible and scientifically comprehensible to us as human beings. Nature is composed of all the Modes. So since God has more attributes than the Nature, it is more than the Nature. Second, Spinoza treated God and its attributes as being eternal. This has two implications: (i) God or Substance, is outside time or duration, and (ii) God is immutable. In contrast to this status of God the world of Modes, that is, *Natura Naturata*, is in time and is mutable. In a letter to Ludwig Meyer, Spinoza wrote: 'It is to the existence of Modes only that we can apply the term Duration; the corresponding term for the existence of Substance is Eternity'.<sup>10</sup> I would

like to point out that the question whether God is also outside space is difficult to answer. In any case it appears that the metaphysical structure of Spinoza's philosophy should be treated as panentheism, not pantheism.

### **Vedanta's View on Immanence and Transcendence**

Vedanta agrees with Spinoza's views regarding the transcendence and immanence of God with respect to the world. The ultimate Reality, Brahman, which also is Self or Atman, transcends the world in two senses. Self represents the thing-in-itself of the phenomenal world, and it also is outside space and time. Simultaneous with being transcendent Self is immanent in the world since it is the essence of everything. In the Gita, Sri Krishna makes this concept very clear to Arjuna: 'By Me all this universe is pervaded through my unmanifested form. All beings abide in Me but I do not abide in them'.<sup>11</sup> The meaning of this verse is that God is immanent in the world and everything in the world is contained in God, but God is much more than the world and the world cannot contain God fully. The immanence of God is expressed in many verses of the Upanishads and the Gita. The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* says: 'The God who is in fire, who is in water, who has entered into the whole world, who is in plants, who is in trees, to that God be adoration, yea, be adoration'.<sup>12</sup> There is another similarity between Spinoza's views and those of Vedanta. In Vedanta there is a creative principle of God, which manifests the world, and it is referred to as the Supreme Nature, or *Para Prakriti*. This principle is similar to *Natura Naturans* of Spinoza.

It should be pointed out that there may be a difference between Spinoza and Vedanta as to the definition of transcendence. Spinoza's God



is the thing-in-itself of all modes, which constitutes the phenomenal world, and this is similar to Vedanta's Self. As I discussed earlier for Spinoza God is outside time duration, he was not clear on the question whether God is outside space also. For Vedanta, God or Brahman clearly is outside both space and time and also immanent in the world. Brahman is even beyond Self or Atman.

### Summary

Spinoza is one of the greatest philosophers of all times. He was knowledgeable of the philosophical and theological views of his time, but he had an independent mind and he developed his own views, which were radically different from the prevailing views. His views were so different that he was excommunicated from the Jewish community of Amsterdam where he lived. I have presented in this article his views related to God and God's relation with the world. I will review his views again very briefly.

Spinoza's philosophy is dominated by the principle of unity and it represents monism. He declared that the world is a manifestation of God, who is substance, and that both mind and matter are attributes of the substance. He rejected the traditional view that God is purely immaterial and God stands apart from God's creation, which is material. God of traditional religions expects human beings to follow God's dictates. Spinoza's God is impersonal, devoid of emotions, and God is immaterial as well as material. Spinoza's God is immanent in the world, but God is more than the world and can be considered to be transcendent also.

Vedanta philosophy agrees with Spinoza's views on certain issues, but it has differences too. Vedanta too represents monism and its philosophy unifies God and the manifested world. However, there is a strong theistic aspect of

Vedanta, which is missing in Spinoza's philosophy. Although Spinoza discussed the concept of 'intellectual love of God', which is the love of human beings directed to God, his God is impersonal and has no emotions. According to Vedanta God has an impersonal aspect as well as a personal aspect. Human beings can love God and God also loves human beings. The personal aspect of God plays a very important role in the spiritual practices related to Vedanta.

Before closing I want to point out that this article is of limited scope. Spinoza's philosophy covers a variety of subjects and many of those were not examined in this article.

I would like to acknowledge gratefully that I received considerable help and guidance from two professors of philosophy: Dr Richard Aquila of the University of Tennessee and Dr Alan Nelson of the University of North Carolina. They explained numerous questions, which I had on various concepts dealing with the philosophy of Spinoza and also those of other Western philosophers.



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8. See Prof. Arun Chatterjee, 'Free Will and Determinism in Vedanta', *Prabuddha Bharata*, 117/11 (November 2012), 533-9.
9. Harry A Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 2 vols (New York: Schocken, 1969), 2.74-5.
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## ‘Visualising’ the Invisible Prana

Tara Jane Paul

see physical energies but only the results of their action, in the same way inner energy cannot be measured but its actions can be directly experienced. This energy provides the fuel for all our experiences. Apprehending the source of this energy helps us to progress in life.

To bring about positive changes in body and mind we must understand the energy through which they work. This is called *prana* in Sanskrit, meaning primary energy. It is sometimes translated as breath or vital force, but it is much more than these. The Sanskrit word ‘prana’ is a combination of two syllables: ‘*pra*’ translated as forth, and ‘*ana*’ as breath or vitality. Thus prana means the ‘going-forth breath’. It denotes a force in constant motion. ‘Prana exists in sentient beings as the energy that drives every action, voluntary and involuntary, every thought, every level of the mind and body. Scientific research describes prana as a complex multidimensional energy: a combination of electrical, magnetic, photonic, ocular, thermal and mental energies.’<sup>1</sup>

### **Prana in the Indian Tradition**

Concepts similar to prana can be found in different cultures and belief systems. *Pneuma* in ancient Greek, *chi* in Chinese, *lung* in Tibetan Buddhism, *ruah* in Hebrew culture, ‘vital energy’ in Western philosophy—all refer to similar concepts. The earliest description of prana in the current sense of vital energy is found in the Vedas. This life energy has been vividly invoked

**W**E DEPEND ON ENERGY for almost everything in our lives. Energy is required to do all kinds of work. The consumption of energy is increasing at a fast pace while available resources remain limited. One of the major concerns of the world today is to increase the availability of energy by producing more energy. For this, the existing energy sources need to be saved or conserved and new sources of energy need to be tapped into. All the ongoing energy debates are concerning physical energy but the sphere of inner energy is seldom noticed.

Scientists of the twentieth century discovered that the entire universe consists of matter-energy relations. Energy and matter are interchangeable. All forces arise through the interaction of matter and energy. So naturally the energy within us determines the quality of our inner life. We cannot

and described in the Vedas. 'He who knows Prana knows the Vedas' is an important declaration of the Shrutis. Prana is mentioned in many *Upanishads*. 'All that exists in the three heavens rests in the control of prana. As a mother her children, oh prana, protect us and give us splendour and wisdom.'<sup>2</sup>

A story in the *Cbhandogya Upanishad* describes how the senses had a dispute as to who among them is the most essential. The ear leaves for one year, returns and asks the others how they were doing without him. In a similar way the other senses also quit for a while. When the prana gets ready to leave, all the other senses understand that it is the most essential. Without breath the body cannot live. Clearly prana won the argument. Prana gives energy to all our faculties, without which they cannot function. Without honouring prana first there is nothing else we can do and no energy with which to do anything. The moral is that controlling prana is the key to controlling our faculties.<sup>3</sup> 'All beings whether living or non-living exist due to prana. Every manifestation in creation forms part of a never ending matrix of energy particles arranged in different densities, combinations, and variations. The universal principle of prana may be in a static or dynamic state, but it is behind all existence on every plane of being from the highest to the lowest.'<sup>4</sup> It is said in the *Katha Upanishad*: 'This whole world—whatever there is—vibrates having originated from Prana.'<sup>5</sup>

In the perspective of yoga, prana is the primordial energy of the universe. 'The Prana is the energy which penetrates us, accumulates in us, circulates in our body, and emerges from our body. Essentially there is no fundamental difference between the cosmic prana and the prana in our body. The prana within us is simply a temporary specialization of the universal cosmic energy.'<sup>6</sup> Prana could be controlled in the

tradition of yoga not only for good health, but for managing the energy in the environment also. 'Prana is the vital force that sustains not only the body, but creation at every level. The seers of India have always known what modern science has been trying to fathom: the existence of a primeval force, its nature, its potential and how to harness it. Every yogic science—mantra, yagna, austerities, different forms of concentration and meditation—is aimed at awakening and enhancing this vital force within the unit of the individual or the wider universe.'<sup>7</sup> The *Hathayoga Pradipika* echoes a similar idea: 'As long as the *vayu* [prana] remains in the body, there is life. Death occurs when the *vayu* leaves the body, therefore retain the *vayu*.'<sup>8</sup>

### **Vivekananda's Concept of Prana**

Swami Vivekananda's vision in this context seems to be very relevant. Swamiji's life as a spiritual teacher, saint and seer can never be evaluated, yet it is a fact that Swamiji was also a scientific visionary, who was well acquainted with the thought process and developments in the field of science. Swamiji had a dream that India will rise and become great with the advancement of science and technology. He proposes the study of raja yoga as a science. His introduction to outline his formulation of raja yoga as science succinctly states:

All our knowledge is based upon experience. ... Religion, as it is generally taught all over the world, is said to be based upon faith and belief ... Nevertheless, there is a basis of universal belief in religion, governing all the different theories and all the varying ideas of different sects in different countries. Going to their basis we find that they also are based upon universal experiences. ... all the religions of the world have been built upon ... direct experience. ... If there has been one experience ... it absolutely follows that that experience has been possible millions of times before, and will be repeated eternally.<sup>9</sup>

The science of raja yoga proposes to put before humanity a practical and scientifically established method of reaching this truth. It proposes to give a means of observing the internal states. The instrument is mind itself. The goal of all its teachings is how to concentrate the mind, to discover the innermost recesses of our minds, to generalise their contents and form our own conclusions from them. In the study of the raja yoga no faith or belief is necessary. Hence the succinct question is: What is the proof in the worldview postulated by Sankhya philosophy and practice of raja yoga? *Pratyaksha*, direct experience; *anumana*, inference from observed facts; or *aptavakya*, competent evidence are the proofs. These possible proofs are quite similar to those accepted in modern science. Direct observation, inference, and experimental evidence are proofs in experimental science. The science of raja yoga is concerned with the mind and its fluctuations. It aims at controlling all thought-waves and mental modifications. The mind and the life force, prana, are co-related to the breath. Therefore regulating breath is the key to the control of prana.

### **Cosmological View**

The principle of prana is set forth in Swamiji's exposition of Vedantic cosmology. He remarks that the different Vedanta systems, whether dualistic, non-dualistic, or qualified non-dualistic, have one common psychology, namely the psychology of the Sankhya system. All the Vedantins agree on the theory of cyclic evolution. Swamiji opined that the subject has been nicely discussed in the Sankhya philosophy and the conclusion of the ancient Indian thinkers is the last word on the causes of evolution:

The belief about cycles is as follows: All matters throughout the universe is the outcome of one primal matter called Akasha; and all force,

whether gravitation, attraction or repulsion, or life, is the outcome of one primal force called Prana. Prana acting on Akasha is creating or projecting the universe (1.359–60).

According to Vedanta philosophy, there are two things in nature, one of which they call Akasha, which is the substance, infinitely fine, and the other they call Prana, which is the force. Whatever you see, or feel, or hear, as air, earth, or anything, is material—the product of Akasha. It goes on and becomes finer and finer, or grosser and grosser, changing under the action of Prana (1.395).<sup>7</sup>

In his lectures on 'Practical Vedanta', Swamiji explains that prana is the principle of life. It is omnipresent and all motion in the body and in the universe is the work of prana. It is given a higher status than *akasha*, and everything lives and knows through the prana. *Akasha* is similar to the idea of ether of the modern thinkers and prana is the primal energy. Prana and *akasha* combine and recombine and form the various elements of the universe. At the end of a cycle of evolution everything subsides and goes back to *akasha* and prana. However, Swamiji explains that it is through the power of prana that this *akasha* evolves into the universe. Prana manifests as gravitation, magnetism, bodily actions, nerve currents, and thought forces. Swamiji defines it as the sum total of all forces in the universe, mental or physical.

Many of the wonderful discoveries of modern science are considered as rediscoveries of what had been found ages ago. It was in Swamiji's times that modern science found that even in the midst of the variety of forces there is unity and that heat, magnetism, electricity, and so forth are all convertible into one unit force. Swamiji remarks:

But this has been done even in the Samhita; old and ancient as it is, in it we meet with this very idea of force I was referring to. All the forces,



whether you call them gravitation, or attraction, or repulsion, whether expressing themselves as heat, or electricity, or magnetism, are nothing but the variations of that unit energy. Whether they express themselves as thought, reflected from Antahkarana, the inner organs of man, or as action from an external organ, the unit from which they spring is what is called Prana (3.399).

The prana cannot act without a medium. In the pure state it resides with *akasha*. When prana changes into forces of Nature, like gravitation or centrifugal force it must have matter. Science too cannot conceive force without matter or matter without force. Therefore, Swamiji says that what we call force and matter are simply the gross manifestations of the same thing, which, when superfine, are called prana and *akasha*. 'Prana you can call in English life, the vital force; but you must not restrict it to the life of man; at the same time you must not identify it with Spirit, Atman' (2.436).

### **Light of Understanding**

The universe is made of one continuous substance and is also in a state of constant change. Matter is eternally changing. Swamiji says: 'There is no such thing as my body, or your body, except in words. ... Matter is represented by the ether; when the action of Prana is most subtle, this very ether, in the finer state of vibration, will represent the mind, and then it will be still one unbroken mass. If you can simply get to that subtle vibration, you will see and feel that the whole universe is composed of subtle vibrations' (1.151). Swamiji hereby affirms the unity of even the world of thought. It is Swamiji's view that the best form of prana is in the brain manifesting itself as the light of understanding. He says: 'The mind ought to control every bit of Prana that has been worked up in the body. ... [The] mind

should have entire control of the body' (1.503). Here Swamiji points out the plight of the ordinary man, illustrated by the proverbial expression of 'placing the cart before the horse'. It is most often a state of the body mastering the mind and consequently throwing the mind off its balance.

### **Prana and the Body**

Swamiji states that the most explicit manifestation of prana in the human body is the motion of the lungs. If this movement of the lungs due to prana stops, all the other manifestations of force in the body will definitely stop. This motion is associated with the breath. It is a common misunderstanding that breath produces prana. On the contrary it is prana that produces breath. The prana moves the lungs and the movement of the lungs thereby draws in air. Swamiji very clearly states that pranayama is not breathing, but controlling that muscular power, which moves the lungs. He says: 'That muscular power that goes out through the nerves to the muscles and from them to the lungs, making them move in a certain manner, is the Prana, which we have to control in the practice of



Pranayama. When the Prana has become controlled, then we shall immediately find that all the other actions of the Prana in the body will slowly come under control' (1.153). When every part of the body is filled with the vital force or prana one is able to control the whole body. Swamiji says: 'All the sickness and misery in the body will be perfectly controlled; not only so, you will be able to control another's body' (ibid.). He exhorts us thus: 'Great prophets of the world had the most wonderful control of the Prana, which gave them tremendous will-power; they had brought their Prana to the highest state of motion, and this is what gave them power to sway the world. All manifestations of power arise from this control' (1.155).

### Unifying Principle

Swamiji says that prana is the unifying principle. It is the law of unity. Prana is all one, whether taken physically, psychically, mentally, morally, or metaphysically. Prana is the unified vibration that sets in motion the ocean of ether and the human self. Swamiji analogises thus: 'Just as in a lake, various strata of ice of various degrees of solidity are formed, or as in an ocean of vapour there are various degrees of density, so is this universe an ocean of matter. This is an ocean of ether, in which we find the sun, moon, stars, and ourselves—in different states of solidity; but the continuity is not broken; it is the same throughout' (2.31).


### Guide to Power Within

Swamiji explains that the knowledge and control of this prana opens to us the door to almost unlimited power:

Just as this whole universe has been generalised in the Vedas into that one Absolute Existence, and he who has grasped that Existence has grasped the whole universe, so all forces have

been generalised into this Prana, and he who has grasped the Prana has grasped all the forces of the universe, mental or physical. He who has controlled the Prana has controlled his own mind, and all the minds that exist. He who has controlled the Prana has controlled his body, and all the bodies that exist, because the Prana is the generalised manifestation of force (1.149).

Swamiji explains that it is relatively easy for a person to control the prana. The prana that works the mind and body is the nearest to us of all the prana in the universe. If one can succeed in grasping it then they gain perfection and complete knowledge.

Indeed, as the Vedas say, we are all under the control of prana. Prana is said to be the Sun that imparts life and light to all and dwells within the heart as the Self of all creatures. Prana in us makes us live and allows us to act. It is only because of our ignorance that we wrongly ascribe prana's effects to our own selves. We must learn to be open to and welcome this great force of prana and seek to bring it into our life and action. Understanding and tapping this resource of inner energy helps us to maintain balance and harmony in life. This is one of the great secrets of raja yoga that Swamiji has laid open before us. 

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5. *Katha Upanishad*, 2.3.2.
6. N C Panda, *Mind and Supermind* (New Delhi: D K Printworld, 1996), 63.
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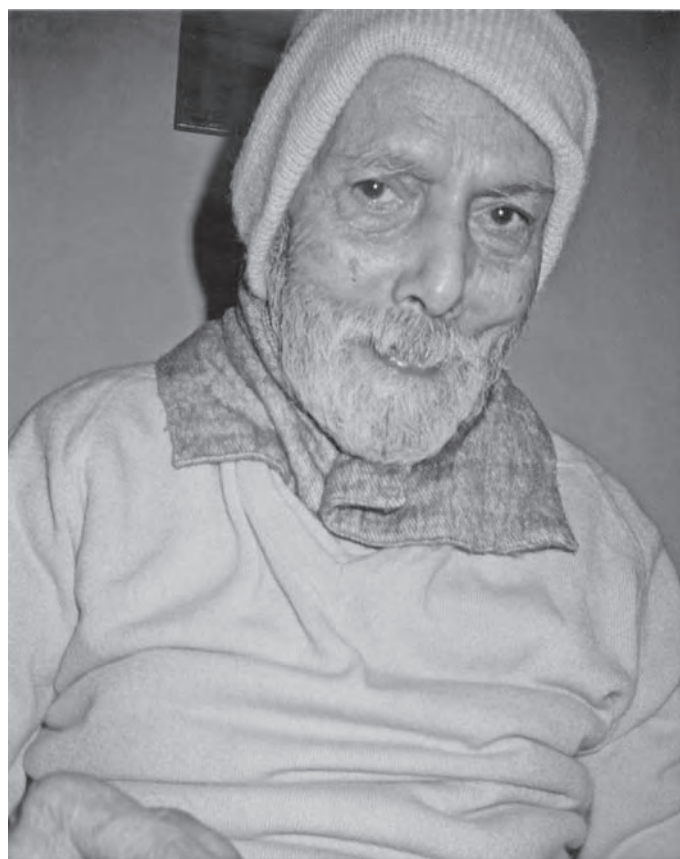
# Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradeshnananda

**Swami Shuklatmananda**

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

**H**E NEVER LIKED FOLDING and arranging clothes with extra care. And, I had this habit of carefully folding and arranging clothes, right from my boyhood. Once he rebuked me for this, saying: 'Why don't you go and dress well to your heart's content? Why have you come to become a monk? Don't you know a monk is supposed to wear discarded clothes of the cremation ground?' It reminds me of an incident from Swami Turiyanandaji's life. It was after his coming back to India from his preaching work in the US. He was practising great austerities in Karnavas. All he had on him was one piece of loincloth. One day, even that one got torn. So, he tore away a loincloth from the discarded ragged clothes scattered around pyres. Perhaps Swami Saradeshnananda was pointing to that incident. Once, he poked me waggishly: 'Are you going to your in-laws' house?' Unable to digest the sarcasm, I blurted out a few angry words. Amused at this he said: 'Oh, it's fun to poke you. I see you've become really furious really!' I felt embarrassed.

But he would always keep everything in its proper place. He used to say: 'You people have a flimsy mind. As a result, you misplace things and don't find them in need. Keep the things in



their proper places and in a proper way, so that they can be traced even in darkness. Always keep the knife's edge away from you. You grope for the torch, the candle, or the matchbox, just because you whimsically keep them one day here and the other day there.'

As regards clothes, he had with him two sets of *fatuas*, vests, dhotis—pieced into two halves, one *uttariya*, upper-wrapper, and two loincloths. Apart from these, he had some minimal warm-clothing that were very old. When going out of his room, he used to always keep the *uttariya* with him. Usually he would wear it by draping it over the body. He used to say: 'Sadhus without *uttariya* look like goons!' If he ever happened to wear anything new, he would first go to Sri Ramakrishna's shrine to offer pranams. He did not even have a bag to keep the few warm clothes that he had. He would simply tie them up with pieces of old shabby clothes. He once demonstrated to me how the sadhus of Uttarakhand

would tie any stuff with clothes. He had even shown me how to spread out the clothes for drying. My clumsy attempts at spreading out the washed clothes would meet with his good-humoured disapproval expressed in such loving admonition: 'Fool! Not like that. You have to spread them like this, then, they'll dry up quickly.' And then, he would patiently demonstrate how to go about the job properly. He did not like leaving clothes in the sun, long after they had dried up, or leaving them to soak in water for hours together. Noticing that Swami Saradeshananda didn't have even a bag, let alone a suitcase, to keep his clothes, Swami Swahananda jokingly said one day: 'Maharaj, he is serving you but you don't have even a measly box for him to inherit!' In fact, most of the things used by Saradeshananda were such that even if they had been lying on the road, nobody would have cared to pick them up!

Characterised as his life was by intense austerities and renunciation, Saradeshananda would perform each and every action with considerable forethought. Being greatly impressed by this quality, Swami Shivananda once said about him: 'Oh! Would Gopesh do it? He does everything quite thoughtfully.' He never compromised with anything that went against monastic principles, not even when requested by close associates and friends.

While in Puri, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu advised his monastic disciple Raghunatha: 'Never listen to idle talk nor participate in it. Never eat or dress well. Have no conceit but give full respect to others, always chant Lord Krishna's name. Always serve wholeheartedly Radha-Krishna of Vraja.' This instruction of Sri Chaitanya was amply illustrated in the life of Swami Saradeshananda. He said about this sermon: 'It will not be an exaggeration if one considers these lines to be the essence of Sri Chaitanya's

teaching. This advice is verily the amulet for those who have renounced everything for God.'

Those who have been fortunate enough to closely interact with Saradeshananda even for a few days would agree that his monastic life was firmly based on renunciation and dispassion. Indeed, during my long association with him, I never saw him evincing the slightest interest for good food or dress. Despite having come to lead a monastic life, we feel upset when we do not get something after our liking. Sometimes we have to ruefully relinquish our wants. In contrast, the tune of his life was renunciation born of dispassion and discrimination. He would say: 'One's egotism is well judged by the number of likes and dislikes that one has.' Unless asked, he would never comment on the quality of food.

If a particular dish happened to be delicious, he was never seen partaking more of it or asking for a second helping. I have been scolded many times for complaining about food. To drive home the importance of curbing the craving for delicious dishes, he would often recite the following verses to sadhus and brahmacharis: 'A human being not in control of one's tongue but in control of the other senses, has no self-control yet, only when one has conquered the tongue, one has mastered them all.'<sup>4</sup> 'This door of hell, which is the destroyer of the soul, is of three kinds—passion, anger and also greed. Therefore one should forsake these three.'<sup>5</sup>

Maharaj used to eat three times a day—morning, evening, and night. This routine never changed. If somebody happened to bring any eatable at odd hours, he just would not touch it. Even if it was prasada, he used to say: 'Touch it on my head and keep it. Give when it is time for food.' In the morning, his breakfast consisted of a quarter litre milk, rusk biscuits, or 4–5 teaspoonfuls of dusted puffed rice, or corn flakes and a banana, if available, cut into small pieces



and put into the bowl of milk. During summer he used to take powdered barley or grams mixed with raw milk.

When I joined the ashrama, he used to come to the dining hall for noon prasad. I used to sit beside him for a year or so. After the bell had gone, he would come slowly dragging his feet, as his right leg had become slightly bent below the knees. He used to suffer from arthritis. When he was late, he used to sometimes say to us, seeing us waiting for him: 'Please don't wait for me. I have become quite old, I walk slowly.' He was rarely late though, and if at all he was, everybody used to definitely wait for him. He would bring along an extremely old brass bowl—enamelled inside and patched up here and there. He had been using it for sixty years. I heard that somebody gifted it to him in 1924, when he was in Madras. It was about 750 ml in size. He would place the bowl on his plate, take everything in that bowl and mix them up before eating. Nothing used to be prepared specially for him. After the meal, he would himself wash the bowl, wipe it with a piece of dry cloth, and then put it upside down with one of its edges slightly raised. He used to say: 'This will allow the flow of air. And the inside of the bowl will not reek of fish-smell.' Hailing from an orthodox Vaishnava family, he had always been a vegetarian. Also, while living in Jayrambati with the Holy Mother, he rarely ever ate fish. He simply would not allow anybody to wash his bowl, dissuading the enthusiast with a mock-alarm: 'Yes. I allow you to wash it and the bowl loses its enamel in no time!' I think he would do so because he never wanted others to serve him.

When it became difficult for him to come to the dining hall, he used to take food in his room itself. Due to his physical inability and the Math having been shifted to the new premises in 1980, it became all the more difficult for him

to come to the dining hall. And, in his room, he was served the meal in much the same manner as he was used to in the dining hall, that is, everything was mixed up in a bowl. He used a spoon for eating. Later, when his health deteriorated further, his food consisting of rice, cereals, and vegetables would be mixed up together and made into a butter-like paste using a mixer. He would eat exactly ten teaspoons of this puree. If we happened to feed him, he would keep a tab on the number of spoons he had been given and the moment the count reached ten, he would turn his head away and say: 'No! I will not eat!' If pressed to eat more, he would try to lie down like a stubborn child. He used one small table on the bed to eat food.

Besides, ten spoons of that mashed food, half a litre of milk and one cup of fruit juice—orange, musambi, or pomegranate—were all that constituted his noon diet. He believed pomegranates were rich in iron and they facilitated haemoglobin formation in blood. Even when he was in his nineties, his blood-haemoglobin level was 14.5 g/dL. He would readily tell the nutritional values of different foods. At night, he would take boiled papaya or pumpkin cut into eight to ten small cubes and a cup of watery lentil soup. In addition, there would be about a quarter litre of milk. All the three times that he ate his food, he would start with the prasad, a quarter-piece of a sweet. He used to take candies of *bael* fruit, also called wood apple, for his constipation. Such was his daily food. And, he would take the same food throughout the year. He used to eat *ust* to keep the body and soul together and for nothing else. However, he never struck us as being, in any way, negligent towards taking suitable nourishment; rather he disliked the excesses—either overeating out of gluttony or starving out of misguided religious emotions.

There was not much restriction in his foods



except that he avoided sour, hot, and spicy foods. When it came to sweets, he used to eat very little of them and that too if it was prepared in the ashrama. He advised us also to eat as little sweets as possible. He strictly forbade some brahmacharis from eating sweets. A brahmachari was too shy to refuse the sweets thrust on his plate in the dining hall and as a result, he would unwillingly eat these. Once, when the brahmachari told about his predicament to Saradeshananda, he said: 'How will you be a sadhu, if you're so feeble-minded? Ask them not to give and if they don't listen, then leave all the sweets right there and get up from the seat. Everything will be set right if you do this for some days.' The brahmachari got results following Saradeshananda's advice. He probably like the sweets such as *Chanar Malpoa*, *Lavanga Latika*, *Balushai*, and

*Radhaballavi*, as he would ask that these sweets be prepared if someone offered him money for feeding the sadhus or for doing some special offering to Sri Ramakrishna.

Saradeshananda's daily routine began with rising up very early in the morning, before 4 a.m. Perhaps it used to be even earlier when he could move about freely as he was often seen doing japa before getting up from the bed. After getting up and finishing ablutions, he would offer salutations to Sri Ramakrishna, sprinkle Ganga-water all over his body and then do japa lying on the bed. By the time I started sleeping in his room, he was unable to sit for doing japa and meditation.

He used to have the breakfast in his room. After having breakfast and leaving the previous day's clothes to soak in a bucket, he would go to the temple, well before the beginning of daily worship. Offering his pranams and doing the parikrama, he used to chant some hymns, either from memory or from a book, and sit for doing japa. When going to the temple, he would carry an umbrella, a bamboo stick, and a small bag that contained his rosary, *Sri Sri Chandi* published from the Udbodhan Office, Kolkata; *Thus Spake Sri Ramakrishna*, *Thus Spake Swami Vivekananda*, *Thus Spake Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*—all published from Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, almost thirty songs of Andal,<sup>6</sup> a pocket edition of the *Sukhmani Sahib*<sup>7</sup> in the Gurumukhi script, handwritten copies of various hymns, and the like. After doing japa, he used to chant some hymns again. When the sanctum was closed for daily offering of food at 11 a.m., he would get up from the seat, prostrate before Sri Ramakrishna and did a parikrama of the temple. Then he would make prostration once again and slowly return to his room. During this time, there would be a visible change in his countenance.

As I recounted earlier, I first met him on such an occasion when he was doing a parikrama of the temple. While sitting for doing japa, he would become deeply absorbed. I had the good fortune to watch him in such moods in a number of occasions. While doing intense japa, his body used to be slightly tilted. Normally, his posture would be neither too erect nor too slack—rather, it would be an easy posture somewhat in between these two extremes. After returning from the temple he would broom the room himself. While going to the temple, he would lock his room. There was nothing to be stolen from his room, except for some ragged clothes or a few old books. On being asked why he locked his room, he replied: ‘Leaving the doors open would amount to tempting unregenerate minds to the predilection of stealing. In that case, we ourselves will be responsible for it.’ After cleaning his room and washing the clothes in plain water, without any detergent, he would bath. While bathing, he would not use any soap. Afterwards when we used to bath him, we persuaded him to use soap occasionally. Also, he seldom used any detergent; rarely once in a month. He would say: ‘My clothes do not get that dirty. Also, frequent use of detergent robs them of their longevity.’

After bathing, he would first sprinkle holy Ganga-water all over his body. He had deep regard for Ganga-water. One tiny phial contained some holy dust of Vraja. Opening this, he would touch the holy dust and make mark out of it on his forehead. Yet another small bottle had the dried-rice, *atke*, prasad of the Jagannath Temple of Puri. He would take one grain from it. Then, with utmost care, he would wipe the pictures of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi. He would do this with such singleminded devotion that he would remain entirely oblivious of others’ presence. Swami Trivikramananda,

the erstwhile secretary of Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban and many other sadhus, including myself, bear testimony to this fact. It was such a wonderful worship! Indeed, whoever was fortunate to witness it could not but be deeply moved.

Saradeshananda had received clear instructions from Swami Saradananda regarding how to spend one’s leisure. After cleaning the photos, he would read the Bhagavata, holding the book on his left palm and turning over its pages, one after another, with his right hand. It was a wonder how he could carry that heavy book on his left palm for over half an hour. I tried this myself, and it was surely not that easy. Later we used to put one portable table on his bed to keep the book. In his reminiscences of Swami Saradananda, Saradeshananda wrote: ‘Once, seeing me spending leisure hours in useless gossiping and other activities, he warned me about such indulgences and advised me to utilize my spare time in reading Srimad Bhagavatam. Obeying his instructions, and reading the Srimad Bhagavatam attentively, I was much benefited. Getting new light of knowledge, many obscure ideas on religious matters were made clear to me. Now, at the end of my life, Srimad Bhagavatam is my constant companion and consolation.’<sup>8</sup>

He would read the main text of the Bhagavata along with the commentary of Sridhara Swami. He would also read the translation by Dhananjay Das Kathiya Baba. He used to bring this book from the library. He sincerely wished that at least Bengali and English translations of the Bhagavata should be published from the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, following Sridhar Swami’s commentary. He once requested Swami Tapasyananda to do that. Swami Tapasyananda told him that he would definitely try, as it was his earnest wish as well. Later, Swami Tapasyananda published an English translation.<sup>9</sup>

Swami Saradeshananda used to say that there has been no Hindu sect that does not have their own version of a translation and commentary of the Bhagavata. After his daily course of reading the Bhagavata, he would talk with monks, especially if there were any guest-monks. Maharaj would enquire thoroughly about that monk's ashrama; indeed, everything from the number of sadhus and brahmacharis, the nature of work, the standard of food, to the number of cows and the amount of milk they gave! With the ringing of bells, he would go to the dining hall.

When Saradeshananda used to go to the dining hall, all the other sadhus used to join him. Swami A was the cynosure of all eyes owing to his eccentric concepts of homeopathy. He was a diehard supporter of homeopathic treatment and allopathy was anathema to him. Everybody used to make fun of him for this. For instance, it was not unusual to find someone asking him whether the entire Ganga would be purified if a drop of *Nux Vom* mother-tincture was mixed with the Ganga water at Haridwar and similar such ridiculous questions. He would not be discouraged so easily; indeed, he would keep on fighting singlehandedly, with all the other sadhus on the other side. It used to be quite a sight! Finally, Swami Saradeshananda used to mediate. He would quip: 'It is not that I do not understand homeopathy, but his 'A-pathy' is quite obscure to me!' Such comments used to bring great joy to the sadhus. Of course, Swami A was a disciple of Swami Saradananda and had great reverence for Swami Saradeshananda.

Swami Saradeshananda was astonishingly meticulous in his routine. Activities that appear trivial would be performed in the same rhythm, even such a small thing as drinking water. Even attending nature's call used to be exactly once in a day and at a fixed time with clocklike precision.

At my wondering as to how it was possible, he said: 'I have seen in Rishikesh that monks defecate only once in a week. It is the characteristic of a yogi.' He used to say: 'Once a yogi, twice a *bhogi*, and often a *rogi*.' That is, a yogi would defecate once in a day, a *bhogi*, one who is engaged in sense-pleasures, twice, and a *rogi*, a patient, many times.

Saradeshananda thoroughly discouraged day-sleep—especially for brahmacharis. He said that it affected memory and the ability to reflect on subtle matters. On account of increased level of fat in the body and laziness, the ability to work also wanes. Apart from this, it leads to a number of other difficulties, that is, it significantly decreases the quality of night sleep and hence makes the practice of brahmacharya difficult for sadhus, and also makes it difficult to sit for japa and meditation in the morning because of lingering tiredness. He himself never indulged in sleep during the day, but he would take rest for an hour after lunch and would encourage others also to do so.

He disliked reading books while lying on bed or rolling about in bed. He would forbid us to read serious books in the sweltering heat of summer. After an hour's rest in the afternoon he used to read newspapers and other ashrama magazines. As long as his health permitted, he busied himself in gardening in the evening. He used to plant saplings, water them, and weed the flower beds. He thoroughly despised eating the easy bread of monastery without putting in one's share of work. When, owing to infirmity of health, it was no longer possible for him to study, or even to sit for a long time, it was mandatory to read out various topics to him for two to three hours. Apart from this, he greatly loved listening to songs, but not those played on a tape recorder. He would become happy if someone would sing for him.



He did not eat anything in the evening. In summer, if any devotee brought sherbet for him, he would dilute it with water before drinking. During the last few years of his life, he used to take a cup of Horlicks every evening. These Horlicks bottles used to be sent by Swami Vireswarananda, the tenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, who once quipped: 'Now I get so many Horlicks bottles that I can open a shop!'

Before sunset Swami Saradeshananda used to go to the temple to do pranam to Sri Ramakrishna. Previously he used to go alone but afterwards, due to old age, he was helped by an attendant. Helped by the attendant and supported by a bamboo stick, he used to walk gently, dragging his feet. Later, when he became more infirm, a wheelchair was bought to take him around the temple premises. After my joining, I did not see him attending the evening vespers. By then, it was no longer possible for him to walk about after evening. However, sitting in his room, he used to hum the evening prayer songs. We were not initially aware of this. One day, being in his next room, we heard him humming a tune. On being asked about this, he told us that ever since he became unable to attend the evening prayers, he had started singing the songs in his room itself. That particular day his voice was blocked and he was trying to sing aloud in order to clear up the throat. Later on, when a brahmachari came as his attendant, the brahmachari used to sing the evening *arati* songs and other bhajans, which he liked. The brahmachari used to sing without a harmonium and Swami Saradeshananda liked his songs. If any young sadhu or brahmachari came to Vrindavan, he would ask them: 'Do you know singing?' If they replied in the affirmative, he would ask them to sing without any instrumental accompaniment. Some of them used harmonium occasionally.

However, he would never impose anything by way of suggestions regarding the choice of songs; rather he would always leave the choice to the singer's own discretion. Indeed, if some of us were to suggest any particular song to be sung, he would become annoyed.

A few songs were especially dear to him. For instance, '*Shata koti shashi hashe mayer charan nakhore*', '*Arupa shayare lila lahari*', '*Kobe trishita e moru chariya jaibo tomari rosalo nondone*', and '*Hari din to gelo sondhya holo par koro amare*'. Apart from these he also liked to listen to Shyama Sangit, Rabindra Sangit, songs by Rajanikanta, and Swami Premeshananda. He did not like songs played on tape recorders. He would say: 'Machine music drowns the singing voice and the lyrics are hardly clear. Also, the loud music hurts the brain.'

Maharaj's eyes were quite alright till the end. After forty he used spectacles for one or two years and did not need them afterwards. When, owing to physical ailments, he could no longer read himself, he would listen to the Gita, *Sri Sri Chandi*, Bhagavata, and *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita*, daily at fixed hours. Apart from these books, we had to read out to him from various books and magazines.

The tenth *skandha*, canto, of the Bhagavata used to be read often, because he was fond of that particular volume. He used to say: 'The tenth *skandha* contains discussions on *parabhakti* or supreme devotion.' He used to be so much absorbed during the reading of any memoirs of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna that any interruption would greatly annoy him. He would readily correct if any word was mispronounced. It seemed that he would visualise, the scenes from *Kathamrita* as described by Mahendranath Gupta. During these readings, he appeared to be in deep contemplation. Sometimes,

seeing him motionless, we used to ask: 'Maharaj, are you listening?' He would readily rebuke: 'Oh, you continue your reading! No, it seems it's not your job.'

When his reminiscences of Holy Mother were published in the Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Order, *Udbodhan*, and later as a book, we read that out to him three-four times. Though we were very eager to read the book to him, he refused to listen to it in the last few years. He would say: 'My body is very frail these days—just a little stimulus is enough to trigger spiritual emotions. And, my nervous system can no longer stand up to such sudden upsurge of feelings.' Indeed it was so. Soon after we would have started reading the reminiscences, his breathing would become fast. Overpowered with emotions he would be unable to lie down calmly and he would become visibly excited. The Bengali book on Sri Chaitanya, *Sri Sri Chaitanyadev*, authored by him, was usually read out to him on every Dol Purnima day. In the year of his passing away, that is 1988, while the chapter on Sri Chaitanya's sannyasa was being read, he suddenly started sobbing. We tried to resume the reading three-four times, but he could not control himself and started weeping bitterly. Forced to stop thus, the reading could not be continued on that occasion.

Swami Saradeshananda was extremely reticent about his personal life. He would laugh off any such question or make diversions to some other topic. Quite a few times, I tried to bring out from him some information regarding his personal life but to no avail. Once he said: 'Fool! I am almost a century-old person. It will run to a Mahabharata if I start telling you everything. But then, what is there to be said at all?' Despite all these, the nuggets I succeeded to collect in many inadvertent moments remain to be shared.

My handwriting was pretty bad when I joined

the Order. Once, the head of our ashrama severely scolded me for my bad handwriting in an application. Later when I started serving Swami Saradeshananda, he asked me to write his letters. Despite being ashamed of my writing, I could not afford to lose the golden opportunity to be a medium of his wonderful words. I readily plunged into the herculean task of improving my handwriting. I thought that he did not notice the change that I managed to bring into my handwriting. One day, in the course of signing a letter, I asked: 'Maharaj, please read the letter.' As he did not answer, I repeated the question. But to my surprise and acute embarrassment, I immediately met with a witty reply: 'What are you boasting of so much? You have improved your handwriting only by writing my letters!' He was so alert! Later on, in many instances, I observed that as long as my behaviour did not run contrary to monastic principles, he would not say anything, notwithstanding the other shortcomings I might have had.

(To be continued)

## Notes and References

4. Bhagavata, 11.8.21.
5. Bhagavadgita, 16.21.
6. Andal was the only female Alvar among the twelve Alvar saints of Tamil Nadu in the tenth century CE. Swami Saradeshananda stayed at Srivilliputhur, the birthplace of Andal, for some days. He learnt Tamil from Swami Paramatmananda, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda. He learnt by heart, *Tiruppavai*, a Tamil sacred song.
7. *Sukhmani Sahib* is a set of hymns from the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and is sung as a morning prayer by the Sikhs.
8. Swami Aseshananda, *Glimpses of A Great Soul: A Portrait of Swami Saradananda* (Hollywood: Vedanta, 1982), 254–5.
9. See *Srimad Bhagavata*, trans. Swami Tapasyananda, 4 vols (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2015).

# Saga of Epic Proportions

Swami Sandarshanananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

NIVEDITA LOOKED UPON THIS PERIOD of voyage with her Master as the best event of her life. She saw a powerful renewal of her love for him. On July 15 she wrote: ‘Now—he is the whole thing—for good or for evil—instead of growing less, I have grown infinitely *more* personal in my love. ... When one turns to him in thought the heart grows free. Blessed be God for making it possible to love like this.’<sup>27</sup> These words are quite important in view of her mental condition she had experienced some time ago in a state of confusion. From Coasting Kent, she wrote; ‘Such a divine talk up on deck! About more early struggles—and then about my school. And last of all I *knelt* and made a pranam!’ (1.182). She ‘caught a glimpse of the fact that his ideal is “to lead like the Baby”’ (1.183). This definitely had made her affection for him heavenly, duly being lost in the beauty of his original divinely being. On 19 July she gave a graphic description of how he was preparing his travelogue for the Bengali organ *Udbodhan* frantically. ‘I wish you know what a blessing that Bengali magazine is! He spends hours concocting a huge letter to it—full of jokes—observations and the shrill scream of prophesy. His whole heart is going into it, the scathing wrath against Anglicisation, Brahmos and the rest, the love and hope for the masses—his burning love for his Master—shrewd observations of life around him—and over and above all this, a deliberate maltreatment of the Bengali

language which makes him about as difficult to read as Carlyle when he first appeared and which is purposed to serve certain tremendous ends!!!’ (ibid.). It is astounding that she could so perfectly summarise Swamiji’s Bengali masterpiece *Parivrajak* and set down in such clear-cut pattern precisely in so few words, giving the impact it was likely to create when published actually. Noticing all her exceptional reactions about Swamiji, one could quietly assess that her love for Swamiji as her spiritual father was cent percent pure and unworldly.

On the other hand, Nivedita was also preparing some matter for publication in the English organ *Prabuddha Bharata* of the Mission, on the voyage. She was doing this work on her impression about India that she gathered in the course of her stay in the country for eighteen months since January 1898. In the first of the couple of letters in June 1899 she sent for the purpose, she wrote at one place:

It was eighteen months ago that I, a stranger, passed this way [her ship left Colombo] before, and tonight, as a man sums up a situation, I have a fancy to make reckoning with my own soul as to the drift of the impressions that I have gathered, in the year and a half just gone.

In the first place, I remember gratefully privileges accorded to few of my race. Received by the Mother-land as one of her own children, I have been permitted to see her, as it were, without her veil. I have been allowed to share in the life of the people. Kindness has been showered

upon me. Neither poverty nor worship has been hidden from my eyes.

And the outstanding impression that I have gathered from such experience is that this is a people with a curious habit of producing great men unexpectedly. Whatever may be thought of the average development of character in the race, I am convinced that moral genius is commoner here than elsewhere. For by 'greatness' I do not particularly wish to imply any kind of intellectual or physical expertness—these I regard as more accessories: I refer rather to a certain largeness of feeling which lifts a man out of all that is individual and makes him stand to humanity as the interpreter of another life. Sometimes that life surrounds him almost as a light upon the face; sometimes we realise it in the growing sweetness with which years of self-sacrifice are borne; in India I have seen it lift even scientific research into sainthood. However it manifests itself, we all know that in some men's veins runs the blood of the gods, and of such men India has more than her due share numerically.

And I can trace this effect to three probable causes. The first two I find in the tremendous emotion and concentration of the Hindu temperament. Hindu feeling is something that makes the merely Western feel himself a dwarf before a giant. That jealous privacy that marks the inner life of Oriental nations causes this feature to be little suspected by Europeans. They are more or less deceived by the mask of indifference that is worn with such success (1.281–2).

The entire matter is an insightful analysis which tells her impeccable ability to delve into the abstract which India is always to the Western mind. The way she delineates the intricacy of Indian race, comparing with the Western, is a rare piece and an eye-opener at the same time. Likewise, the other matter, dealing with society, civilisation, and culture of India, that she sent after

a few days was equally rich and worth studying. A portion of it says:

Hindu culture is, in fact, like a gigantic tree which is constantly embracing a wider and wider area with its roots. Through ages this huge organism has been at work, silently reclaiming more and more of humanity from barbarism. Perhaps each successive stratum won may have been a new caste taken in. Religious notions would seem to be the first great unifying nerves sent out. Then follow, though in what order I cannot guess, various accretions of custom, till by degrees appear the old gentleness, the old self-direction, and the old horror of defilement' (1.283).

Her proficiency to grasp the epitome of anything Indian leaves one wondering how she could accomplish it in such a short while despite she herself being from an alien culture and civilisation, having her upbringing totally in a different social environment. The only answer one finds to it ultimately is in her wholehearted submission to her Master, and in whose deliberate acceptance of her being a perfect material for discipleship, which a perfect teacher always seeks. To harness and channel the verve and talent of her type to a realm hitherto unexplored by any foreign lady was not the job for an ordinary teacher. The intellectual thrust with which she asserted herself required someone of Swamiji's attainment to sustain. The exclusive style and uniqueness traceable in her writings therefore reflect Swamiji's inspiration and training. The stamp of her works is thus extremely scholarly and penetrative.

(To be continued)

## References

27. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, 2 vols (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1982), 1.181.



# BALABODHA

*Ancient Wisdom Made Easy*

## Jnana

INDIAN TEXTS have numerous references to the word 'jnana' and there are many disciplines that discuss the pursuit of 'jnana'. Therefore, it is necessary to know the meaning of this word. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word 'jnana' is derived from the root *jna*, which means to know, to have knowledge, to become acquainted with, to perceive, to apprehend, to understand, to ascertain, to investigate, to recognise, to regard, or to consider. When the suffix '*ana*' is added, the resultant word 'jnana' means knowledge, knowing, perception, apprehension, understanding, ascertainment, investigation, recognition, or consideration.

'Jnana' can refer to both the process and corpus of knowledge. Consciousness can also be referred to by the word 'jnana'. When taken to mean knowledge, jnana can be broadly categorised into two types: *paroksha*, mediate and *aparoksha*, immediate. Any jnana or knowledge that is acquired through some medium like the sense organs or the mind is called *paroksha* jnana. The perception of any object by the eyes is a *paroksha* jnana and so is the study of any text or any branch of knowledge. In short, anything that has to be known with the help of the mind is known as *paroksha* jnana. That would encompass *everything* that we learn in this universe.

The second kind of knowledge is called *aparoksha* jnana. It can be obtained only when one transcends the mind and the sense organs,

that is, the body-mind complex. It is the knowledge of one's true nature, Brahman. That is why the experience of Brahman is called *aparoksha-anubhuti* or immediate experience as opposed to the experiences of the material world that are *paroksha-anubhuti* or mediate experience.

When the prefix *vi* is added to the word 'jnana', it becomes *vijnana*, which means special knowledge. It refers to the in-depth study of a particular discipline, the sciences, or the knowledge of Brahman. When the prefix '*pra*' is added to the word 'jnana', it becomes *prajnana*, which means intelligence, consciousness, a mark, or a sign. When the prefix '*a*' is added to the word 'jnana', it becomes *ajnana*, which means ignorance. If the prefix '*su*' is added to 'jnana', it becomes *sujnana*, which means right knowledge. If the prefix '*aa*' is added to the word 'jnana', it becomes *aaajnana*, which means complete knowledge. If the prefix '*sam*' is added to the word 'jnana', it becomes *samjnana*, which means knowledge and understanding.

Swami Vivekananda commented on the path of knowledge to understand one's true nature, which he called *Jnana Yoga*. It involves a discerning analysis of the unreality of the universe to understand its basis, Brahman. This has to be done through the practice of continuous discernment called *viveka* combined with analytical reasoning called *vichara*. By constantly doing this along with the practice of dispassion and renunciation called *vairagya*, one eventually understands the ephemeral nature of the universe and the illusion that this universe is, ceases to have any reality. Then, the ultimate reality, Brahman is comprehended.

PB

# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *Truth Prevails*

ONCE A KING NAMED PRAPANCHANA ruled a country on the banks of River Sarasvati. One day he went to the forest for hunting and saw a doe nursing her fawn. He aimed his arrow at that doe. At this, the doe cursed the king to be turned into a tiger and the curse immediately took effect.

The king, who had now turned into a tiger, pleaded the doe to be freed of the curse. Before dying, the doe said: 'You will bear the curse by living as a tiger for a hundred years. Then, you will be freed of the curse by a cow named Nanda.' The tiger turned king forgot his past life and lived with the qualities and thoughts of a tiger. Thus, many years passed with the tiger eating other animals.

Once, some cows came to graze in that tiger's forest. After grazing the whole day, the cows started to return to their village in the evening. Of them, a cow named Nanda became delayed and since it started raining, the other cows did not notice it. Nanda was standing in the shelter of a tree. However, seeing that she was left behind, she started running towards her village.

Then, the tiger Prapanchana was searching food for its cubs. Seeing Nanda to be a good prey, the tiger blocked its way and got ready to pounce. Nanda was not in the least bothered about losing her life, but was disturbed at the thought of her calf waiting for her in her village.

She said to the tiger that was ready to kill her: 'Sir, my calf would be suffering of hunger in my village. I am running so fast only to nurse her. I would return here after nursing my calf and handing it over to my cow friends. Then you can make me your prey as you wish. I want to meet

my calf for the last time and give her my parting message. Now, you should have mercy on me and allow me to return after meeting my calf.'

The tiger was not ready to listen to Nanda. It said: 'How can I be sure that you will return if I leave you now? You are destined to be my prey today and I am going to kill you now.'

Nanda said: 'I always keep my word. Please believe me.' And she vowed to face retribution if she could not keep up her word. Probably, a human being would not have changed one's mind but most likely because it was a tiger, Prapanchana's heart melted. The tiger said: 'Alright, I believe you. But, you have to come immediately after seeing your calf. Also, remember one thing. Many people would try to change your mind saying that it is alright to tell a lie to save a life. You should not be carried away by such talks and should return here.'

Nanda said: 'I will never cheat you. Moreover, it is said that one who cheats others, cheats oneself.' Saying thus, she ran towards her village with the tiger's permission.

The calf was greatly perturbed on not seeing Nanda and so, on seeing her mother, she jumped in joy and started drinking milk. But, she was surprised that her mother was sad and not licking her in love as usual. She asked Nanda: 'Mother! Why are you sad? Can't you tell me what happened?' Nanda told her what had happened. Hearing that, the calf cried: 'Mother, I will also come with you and become the prey of that tiger.' Moved, Nanda consoled the calf and taught her how to protect herself, how to live, and how to interact with others after her death.

Then Nanda handed over her calf to her mother and cow friends and explained to them her situation. Just as the tiger had predicted, Nanda's mother and friends said: 'If one saves a life by telling a lie, that would be as good as truth.' They gave Nanda such reasoning and asked her to ignore her promise to the tiger. They said this because of their love for Nanda and her calf.

But, Nanda did not accept the reasoning of her mother and friends. She said to them: 'One might even tell a lie to save someone. But, I will never tell a lie to save my life. One has to reap the fruits of the good and evil deeds one does. Heaven, dharma, and liberation—all depend on our words. Hence, one who gives up truth, gives up all that is good and auspicious. One who thinks something and speaks something else, becomes a thief who steals one's own self.'

No one could shake Nanda's firm stand. She took leave of everyone and reached the tiger and said: 'I have finished all my duties. Now, you can make me your prey.' Then, the calf came running to that spot, stood before Nanda, and said to the tiger: 'Kill me with my mother and appease your hunger.' Nanda's calf had inherited her qualities; as the mother, so the child.

The tiger remembered its cubs. It thought: 'How much would my cubs suffer if I die? Wouldn't this calf also suffer likewise if this cow

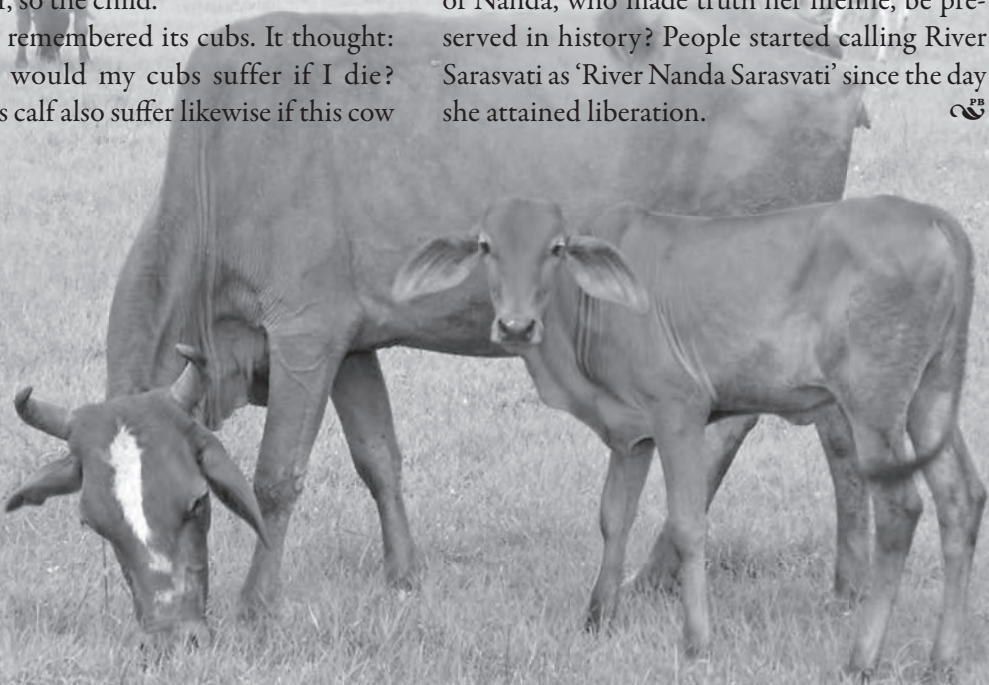
dies?' This thought moved the tiger. Also, the fact that the cow had come to keep up her word, not listening to her mother and friends, touched the tiger. It said to Nanda: 'I have changed my decision to kill you. Your great quality of truthfulness has won me over. Your truth itself has saved you now. Henceforth, I don't want a life dependent on killing others. I hate such a life. You should give me good advice.'

Nanda gave the tiger an advice that needs to be followed by entire humanity: 'One who bestows fearlessness upon all living beings attains Brahman.'

When the cow stopped talking, the tiger understood that her name was Nanda and it saluted her. At that instant, Prapanchana, who was living in the form of a tiger, was freed from the curse, and resumed his old form of a king. Then, there appeared the goddess of justice, by whose blessings, Nanda was liberated and became one with God. She became one with the eternal, blissful, state of Brahman, free from all suffering, repeated births and deaths, and all misery.

Prapanchana returned to his kingdom and resumed his rule as before. Should not the name of Nanda, who made truth her lifeline, be preserved in history? People started calling River Sarasvati as 'River Nanda Sarasvati' since the day she attained liberation.

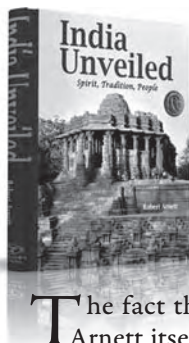
PB





# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



**India Unveiled:  
Spirit, Tradition, People**  
Robert Arnett

Atman Press, 21404, Cherokee Avenue, Columbus, Georgia 31906, USA.  
Website: [www.AtmanPress.com](http://www.AtmanPress.com). 2014.  
308 pp. HB. \$65. ISBN 9780965290098

The fact that this book is written by Robert Arnett itself makes it unique in that it is written from a third person's point of view by somebody who is not a resident of India. The preface tells us about writer's motivation towards writing this book. He wanted to present India to the West with all its beauty and spirituality. It was spirituality indeed that brought him to India.

He has captured India through photos, some spellbound ones. The stunning photography printed in fine art paper displays the glories and contrasts of ancient and modern India. Also, his superb narrative accurately describes the richness of India's many-faceted culture.

This book is a good read for everybody in this world. It can be an eye-opener for an Indian who is just curious to know how a Westerner sees us as an Indian. And through this a Westerner can learn about India and her traditions, cultures, and environments. This also can be a traveller guide as well to know which Indian state has what to offer to a traveller.

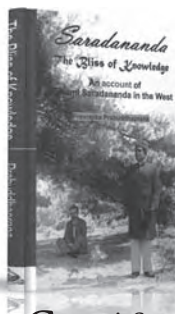
As a citizen of India, there were several places in this book where it felt like falling in love with India all over again! It is like knowing India from another point of view rather than one's own. As Indians, we do things but don't always really wait and ponder why we are doing that. This book is a way of refreshing our memory, to know the meaning of different acts that we do habitually—be it ringing bell in temple, or why we have Kumbha Mela in four places. There are stories in the book which will touch your heart, like the story about

the small girl in Khajuraho that touched my heart.

Several appendices enhance the book. The first succinctly summarises the British Rule in India from 1613 to Independence in 1947. The second is a timeline of India compared to the rest of the world, dating from before 3000 BCE up to the present time. The third is an excellent but simple glossary that explains unfamiliar terminology and then there is a collection of thoughtful quotes on India.

On the flip side, as a reader and especially as an Indian sometimes it felt as if Arnett was trying to portray everything in a positive way, be it the Sati Ritual or the Indian marriage system and many more controversial and debatable issues. All in all, I personally felt this book could be a coffee-table book in every household, perfect for browsing through by the armchair traveller with a cup of tea, yet informative and engaging for anybody serious in learning the culture of subcontinent.

Papiya Debnath  
Pune



**Saradananda,  
The Bliss of Knowledge:  
An Account of Swami  
Saradananda in the West**  
Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana

Sarada Math, Dakshineswar, Kolkata  
700076. [www.srismath.com](http://www.srismath.com). 2016. 285  
pp. HB. ₹ 90.

Swami Saradananda was the 'Vasuki' of the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. She once said that none but he could carry her burden. Swami Vivekananda thought of him as his apt substitute among his brother-disciples to carry forward his work in the West, when he was thinking of returning to India. Sister Nivedita regarded him as an 'organiser and carrier of responsibilities'.

Writing about such a personality is a real challenge and more so when an exhaustive biography,



*Glimpses of A Great Soul: A Portrait of Swami Saradananda* by Swami Aseshananda, and other material on him is already available. In the Preface, Pravrajika Amalaprana informs the readers that Pravrajika Prabuddhaprana is 'documenting a little known chapter of Swami Saradananda's life' (9). True to this statement, we find a less-known photograph of Swami Saradananda in his advance age holding a stick with J J Goodwin in the background on the cover.

This book begins with Saradananda, who 'was so self-effacing that if any one praised him, he would humbly stop him' (13), explaining the meaning of his name to an audience in America. The pages unfold with a vivid description of Saradananda's struggle to adapt to the Western culture and etiquette: 'Vivekananda nudged Swami Saradananda, instructing: "The knife is held in the right hand and the fork in the left. Don't take such big pieces; cut small pieces"' (23-4). 'Miss Müller's cook served macaroni in cream sauce', which Saradananda found insipid in taste and 'felt queasy' after finishing it. (23).

From his struggles to acclimatise to the mundane realities of his immediate environment, Prabuddhaprana brings forth to us his fear, when asked to lecture by his beloved leader, Swamiji, whom he adored and worshipped. He told Mahendra Nath Datta, Swamiji's youngest brother: 'Oh brother! Naren has put me into real trouble. I have to give a lecture before all. I have no practice making speeches. What if I make a mistake?' (31). However, he overcame this fear by listening to Swamiji's advice. He gave his first lecture, 'The Vedanta Philosophy' on 7 July 1896 in the US after his coming from London on 2 July 1896. 'The *Boston Evening Transcript* of July 8th reported: "The first lecture of the Swami Saradananda was listened to with great interest. In spite of the severe storm, about seventy persons were present"' (48).

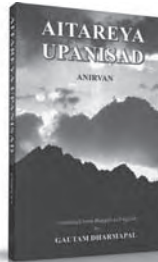
In the following pages the reader travels with Prabuddhaprana from one place to another, from one setting to another in the US, watching Saradananda impress people from varied backgrounds—world-class university professors, religious leaders, spiritual aspirants, and many others—teaching them with authority various aspects of Indian philosophy and literature and their application.

This book includes some of his letters written to his well-wishers and those written by people who came into his contact. Some of these are particularly useful like the one written to Mrs Bull on 28 January 1897 (110-1). Miss Waldo's letter to him echoes the thoughts and feelings of a struggling aspirant (112). At the end of this book are given ten must-read lectures by Saradananda, the synopses or references to which one finds while reading the book's main text. These lectures are on varied topics of Indian philosophy and their content might be familiar to the Indian mind. Their flow, interwoven with high ideals, is very poetic. For instance, 'The Poetry of the Vedas' takes one's mind to the realms of beauty and purity, nay, to the doorsteps of the Absolute.

This book deals with one chapter, a small chapter indeed, of the life of a gigantic personality. It has the capacity, through simple narration and brief chapters, to arouse and sustain the reader's interest, particularly of one interested in Indian culture and religions. This book introduces the reader not only to a pure and humble life dedicated to God, but also to Vedanta and how Indian philosophy has influenced the Indian mind over time.

Saroj R S

Noida, Uttar Pradesh



### ***Aitareya Upanishad***

Anirvan.

Trans. Gautam Dharmapal

Akshaya Prakashan, 2/18, Ansari Road, New Delhi 110 002. Email: [harish@akshayaprakashan.com](mailto:harish@akshayaprakashan.com). 2013. 270 pp. PB. ₹ 250. ISBN 9788188643493

The quintessence of Vedantic gospel is perfectly distilled and pithily articulated by these four Upanishads belonging to the four Vedas—by the *Aitareya Upanishad* belonging to the Rig Veda, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* belonging to the Yajur Veda, the *Chhandogya Upanishad* of the Sama Veda, and the *Mandukya Upanishad* of Atharva Veda. The laconic *mahavakya*, 'Prajñanam Brahma; consciousness is Brahman' is embedded in the *Aitareya Upanishad* and tersely states the profound Vedantic verity of the identity of Atman-Brahman rather implicitly.

The equation between the all-pervading

Brahman and indwelling Atman is crisply expressed by the *Aitareya Upanishad* through its epigrammatic major text.

This book is a faithful and lucid English translation of the Bengali texts, both written and spoken, of Anirvan, a spiritual master, apparently possessed of both *paroksha jnana*, mediate knowledge and *aparoksha anubhuti*, immediate realisation. A master of Sanskrit language, Anirvan's interpretations possess the multiple merits of originality, profundity, scholarship, and distinct plausibility. A perusal of this book reveals that it is certainly the chosen child of the usually niggardly muse of the four-faced deity Brahma, Sarasvati, as she generously lavishes on him her largesse of recondite spiritual lore. This substantial book makes a riveting, if tough, reading and should vastly appeal to serious students of the Upanishads.

This book opens with a brief life-sketch of Anirvan and has a General Introduction and Introduction which are followed by a Preface and three chapters which elaborately interpret the mantras of the *Aitareya Upanishad*. The triad of chapters explaining the import of the Upanishad mantras is followed by an Epilogue. There is at the end a section called Abbreviations followed by an Index.

The General Introduction shows how the Upanishads, which elaborate the metaphysics, form an integral part of the Vedas of which the other parts are Mantra or Samhita, the Brahmanas connected with it, and the Aranyaka revealing the inner mystic meanings. The meaning of the word 'Upanishad' is also analysed in this section.

The elaborate Introduction shows how the *Aitareya Upanishad* is structurally located within the corpus of Rig Veda and points out that the *Aitareya Upanishad* is constituted of the last four chapters of the second Aranyaka and only three chapters discuss the ontological knowledge of the Upanishad and the last chapter is both its beginning and end. Other topics discussed in this section are the meaning of the seer's name Mahidasa, his glory, the relation between *Aitareya Aranyaka* and *Aitareya Upanishad*, the details about Soma Yajna, the best of sacrifices and a host of other ritualistic practices, which have deep inner

significance. The Introduction has also a short summary of *Aitareya Upanishad*.

The central theme of the Preface is the insightful interpretation of the peace invocation. The significance of the chanting it at the beginning as well as at the end of the Upanishad is explained convincingly.

The first chapter of the Upanishad gives 'a description of the mystery of creation in the mystic language of the mystics'. The doctrine of the Self as the source of all manifestation, the pivotal significance of the *iksha* of the Self, seeing with a will, the step-by-step creation of the various phenomena like the worlds, the Purusha, the limbs of the Purusha, the description of the further processes of manifestation, and the like, form the subject-matter of the first chapter.

The second chapter deals with the three births of the Self, namely, Purusha, the second birth as a boy on earth from the womb of the woman, and the third birth taking place after death as a result of evolution or ascent to the heavenly world as a self-possessed immortal being.

The third chapter delineates the true nature of the Self. It is affirmed that, in its true form, the Self is knowledge that is consciousness. The manifestation of consciousness in different forms in our worldly consciousness not only as the inner subjective world but as the external objective world, the anchorage of everything in consciousness, the identity of consciousness with Brahman and the truth of consciousness being the sole means of self-possessed immortality are dealt with in this chapter.

The book abounds in a plethora of references and details touching the ritualistic practices and their symbolic significance and the sap of knowledge-content embedded within the outer shell of rituals. The narrative turns, at times, highly technical, obscure and difficult. The book is certainly an index of the enlightened seer-author's profundity of transcendental knowledge. The book should, at once, be the delight of Upanishadic scholars and a challenge to the eager laity hovering on the fringes of the vast ocean of Upanishadic thoughts.

N Hariharan  
Madurai

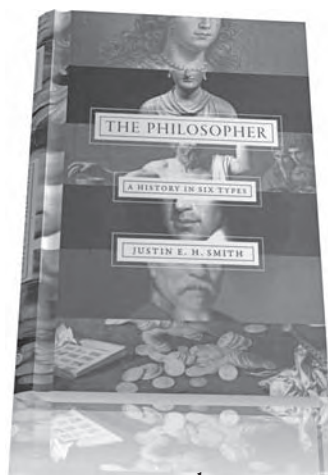
# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
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**The Philosopher:  
A History in Six Types**

Justin E H Smith

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. 2016. xii + 272 pp. \$27.95. HB. ISBN 9780691163277.



THIS BOOK, an essay in the proper Montaignean sense, seeks to answer that most fundamental of philosophical questions: What is philosophy? It does so, however, in an unusual way: by refraining from proclamations about what philosophy, ideally, ought to be, and by asking instead what philosophy has been, what it is that people have been doing under the banner of philosophy in different times and places. In what follows we will survey the history of the various self-conceptions of philosophers in different historical eras and contexts. We will seek to uncover the different ‘job descriptions’ attached to the social role of the philosopher in different times and places. Through historical case studies, autobiographical interjections, and parafictional excursions, it will be our aim to enrich the current understanding of what the project of philosophy is, or could be, by uncovering and critically examining lost, forgotten, or undervalued conceptions of the project from philosophy’s distinguished past.

This approach could easily seem not just unusual but also misguided, since philosophy is generally conceived as an a priori discipline concerned with conceptual analysis rather than with the collection of particular facts about past practice. As a result of this widespread conception, most commonly, when philosophers set about


answering the question as to the nature of their discipline, they end up generating answers that reflect the values and preoccupations of their local philosophical culture. Thus Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari answer the question, in their 1991 book *What Is Philosophy?*, by arguing that it is the activity of conceptual innovation, the generating of new concepts, and thus of new ways of looking at the world. But this is a conception of philosophy that would be utterly unfamiliar to, say, Ludwig Wittgenstein, who suggested that philosophy is the practice of ‘shewing the fly the way out of the bottle’, or, alternatively, that it is ‘a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language’, and it would be more unfamiliar still to the natural philosopher of the seventeenth century, who studied meteorological phenomena in order to discern the regularities at work in the world around us, and had no particular interest in devising new concepts for discerning these regularities. Thus when Deleuze and Guattari argue that philosophy is the activity of concept coining, they should really be saying that this is what they would like philosophy to be.

Philosophy has in fact been many things in the 2,500 years or so since the term was first used, and here we will be interested in charting its transformations. We will be equally interested in exploring the question whether the activity

of philosophy is coextensive with the term, that is, whether it is *only* those activities that have been explicitly carried out under the banner of *philosophia* that are to be considered philosophy, or whether there are also analogical practices in cultures that have evolved independently of the culture of ancient Greece that can also be called by the name 'philosophy'. I will be arguing that they can and should be, but even if we restrict our understanding of philosophy to those cultural traditions that bear some historical and genealogical relationship to the practice in ancient Greece that was first called by this name, we still discover a great variety of divergent conceptions of what the activity in question is. Let us, in any case, in what follows, use the term 'Philosophia', with a capital 'P', when we wish to explicitly mark out the genealogical connection between authors, arguments, and texts throughout the broader Greek, Roman, Islamic, and Christian world, while using 'philosophy' to designate cultural practices, wherever they may occur, that bear some plausible affinity to those cultural practices that fall under the heading of 'Philosophia', which, again, signals a particular historical tradition and thus, strictly speaking, a proper noun.

The sociologist Randall Collins, author of an extensive and very wide-scoped study of the development of schools of philosophy throughout history and at a global scale, identifies as philosophers those people, anywhere in the world, who treat 'problems of the reality of the world, of universals, of other minds, of meaning'. Collins does not discern any particular difficulty in picking out clear-cut examples of philosophical schools in different regions and centuries, and the problems he lists are not of particular or sustained interest to him as a sociologist. Yet there have been many self-identified philosophers who have not been interested in the problems in this list and have instead been interested in other,

very different problems (for example, explaining 'unwholesome vapours'). There are, moreover, many thinkers who have been interested in these problems but who have not belonged to the sort of schools of interest to Collins; they have had the right interests, but have lacked the sociological embedding to be able to come forward, socially, as philosophers.

Typically, where there is such a sociological context, philosophers have expended considerable effort to identify those activities or projects that philosophy is *not*. Some of these are, mutually exclusive in relation to at least some others. Philosophy, to begin with a classic distinction, is not sophistry. This contrast in turn breaks down into two further defining features of the activity. First of all, philosophy is concerned with finding the truth, whatever the truth may be, unlike sophistry, which is concerned, to use the well-known phrase, with 'making the weaker argument the stronger'. Second, philosophy is practiced by people who are not interested in worldly gain. Philosophers do not accept money in exchange for their truth-revealing arguments, while it is principally for the sake of money that Sophists engage in argumentation. Philosophy moreover is the activity that deploys the laws of logic, or the rules of proper reasoning, in order to provide true accounts of reality. Here philosophy contrasts with traditions that we today think of as 'religion' and 'myth', to the extent that these tend not to take inexpressibility or logical contradictoriness as weaknesses in attempted accounts of reality. On the contrary, it is often argued that logical contradiction, expressed in the form of 'mysteries', plays an important role in the success and durability of religions. Christianity, for example, endures not *in spite of* its inability to answer the question of how exactly three persons can be one and the same person, but rather *because of* the impossibility of answering this question. 



# REPORTS

## **New Mission Centre**

A new branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission has been started at **Gwalior** in **Madhya Pradesh**. The address of the centre is 'Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramakrishna Puri, Thatipur, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh 474011', phones: (0751) 234-1091 and 234-2241, and email: <gwalior@rkmm.org>.

## **News of Branch Centres**

The Industrial Training Institute (ITI) of **Agartala** centre has received ISO 9001:2015 certificate for a period of three years.

Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, declared open the Sister Nivedita Cultural Hall at **Baranagar Mission Ashrama** on 24 September 2016.

The first floor of monks' quarters at **Bhubaneswar** centre was inaugurated on 25 August, the holy Janmashtami day.

All the 23 students of **Chandigarh students' home** who appeared in Class 12 examinations 2016 conducted by CBSE and other boards passed with the first division marks, 60% or above; 21 of them secured star marks, 75% or above.

The headmistress of the primary school of **Chengalpattu** centre has received Dr Radhakrishnan Best Teacher Award from the Government of Tamil Nadu. The award comprising a medal, a citation, and a cash prize of ₹ 10,000 was handed over to her on 5 September, the Teachers' Day. Also, three students of **Chengalpattu** higher secondary schools were adjudged champions in junior, senior, and super-senior categories in the zone level games and sports



*Centenary Celebrations at Math Chandipur*

held by the School Education Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, in August.

On 11 September, Swami Gautamanandaji, Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, inaugurated the new community welfare centre building constructed by **Chennai Math** at Meyyur village in Tiruvallur district, as a part of its rural development activities there.

Sri V Shanmuganathan, Governor of Meghalaya, visited **Coimbatore Mission** centre on 20 September and gave away prizes to the students who had won the cultural competitions organized by the centre.

**Deoghar** centre served lemonade to 8,200 pilgrims during the Shravani Mela from 20 July to 18 August.

A student of Medinipur school secured the ninth rank and a student of **Rahara** centre the tenth rank in the West Bengal Joint Entrance Examinations (Medical) conducted this year.

Sri Ram Naik, Governor of Uttar Pradesh, inaugurated the Nivedita Nurses' Hostel building at **Vrindaban** centre on 24 September.

The third and concluding phase of the Centenary Celebrations of **Ramakrishna Math, Math Chandipur**, was conducted from 14 November 2016 to 28 February 2017 with various programmes including devotees conventions, cultural competitions, drama performances, and so on. Srimat Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj released the special souvenir 'Amritam' on the auspicious Tithi Puja Day of Swami Premanandaji Maharaj. On 20 January 2017, there was a programme on 'Harmonisation of Religions' in the evening. Swami Suvirananda, Assistant General Secretary,

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, presided over the function. Other speakers were Swami Balabhadrananda, Assistant General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Dr Sekh Ahmed Tajuddin, Reverend Father K C Thomas, and Prof. Subhas Chandra Saha.

Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, declared open the new dining-hall extension at **Durban (South Africa)** centre on 9 September. On 11 September, he unveiled the newly installed statue of Swamiji at the centre and also inaugurated the centre's platinum jubilee and Sister Nivedita's 150th birth anniversary celebrations.

### **Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Abhedanandaji Maharaj**

**Jammu** centre conducted special worship, devotional music, and a lecture on 24 September 2016 which were attended by about 120 devotees.

**Swamiji's Ancestral House** held a special programme at Sibpur, Howrah, on 27 September which was attended by about 300 people.

### **Relief**

**Flood Relief: Allahabad** centre distributed 304 kg rice, 304 kg dal, 152 kg edible oil, 760 kg potatoes, 152 kg salt, 304 kg sugar, 305 saris, 304 bedsheets, 58 leggings, and 152 blankets among 153 affected families of Rewa district in Madhya Pradesh on 13 October.

**Winter Relief:** 655 blankets were distributed to poor people through the following centres: **Cossipore:** 300, from 20 September to 12 October; **Khetri:** 55, on 23 October; **Ramharipur:** 300, on 20 and 21 September.

**Distress Relief:** The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: **India:** (a) **Barasat:** 558 saris and 121 dhotis from 1 to 7 October. (b) **Dehradun:**

1,285 shirts and 233 pants from 30 June to 15 September. (c) **Gadadhar Ashrama:** 106 saris, 25 school bags, and 30 children's garments on 5 October. (d) **Guwahati:** One lakh halogen tablets on 7 August, and 254 saris and 70 dhotis on 25 and 30 September. (e) **Manasadwip:** 500 saris and 50 dhotis on 7 October. (f) **Muzaffarpur:** 3,000 shirts, 3,014 pants, and 1,999 T-shirts from 3 to 30 September. (g) **Naora:** 500 kg rice, 100 kg flour, 25 kg vegetable oil, 75 kg lentils, 100 kg onion, 200 kg potatoes, 25 kg sugar, 10 kg vermicelli, 2,238 saris, 600 dhotis, 240 petticoats, 1,217 children's garments, and 50 mosquito-nets from 2 to 17 October. (h) **Ramharipur:** 200 saris, 100 dhotis, and 100 uttariyas from 20 to 29 September. (i) **Silchar:** 2,659 saris, 482 dhotis, 150 frocks, 150 shirts, and 150 pants from 23 to 29 September. (j) **Tiruvalla:** 350 kg rice, 70 kg green gram, 105 kg sugar, 17 kg milk powder, and 17 kg tea leaves on 11 September. (k) **Vrindaban:** 400 kg rice, 400 kg flour, 100 kg dal, 100 kg edible oil, 200 kg salt, 20 kg turmeric powder, 20 kg tea leaves, 40 kg milk powder, 100 kg sugar, and 200 bars of washing soap on 30 September. **Bangladesh:** (a) **Baliati:** 160 saris and 60 lungis on 8 October. (b) **Dhaka:** 1,300 kg flour, 1,300 litres of edible oil, 1,300 kg sugar, 1,300 kg semolina, and 1,300 saris from 27 September to 12 October. (c) **Dinajpur:** 606 saris, 304 dhotis, and 122 chaddars from 10 September to 8 October.

**Flood Rehabilitation: Tamil Nadu:** Swami Gautamanandaji handed over 40 low-cost houses constructed by **Chennai Students' Home** to flood-affected families at Poovalambe village in Thiruvallur district on 27 October. The locality where the houses had been constructed was renamed 'Ramakrishnapuram'. On the same day the centre distributed 46 stoves and an equal number of saris, T-shirts, steel racks, mats, dustbins, buckets, and mugs to 46 poor families of the village.



## WORKS OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Abhedananda in India (in 1906)	100.00	Ramakrishna Kathamrita and Ramakrishna	70.00
An Introduction to the Philosophy of Panchadasi	10.00	Reincarnation	60.00
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Attitude of Vedanta Towards Religion	50.00	Religion, Revelation and God	80.00
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## WORKS OF SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

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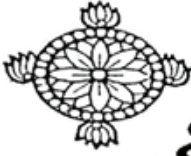
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| ১। শ্রীশ্রী রামকৃষ্ণের অনুধ্যান                          | ১৩। দীন মহারাজ                                     | ২৭। সঙ্গীতের রূপ                   |
| ২। লগুনে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ                               | ১৪। গুরুপ্রাণ রামচন্দ্রের অনুধ্যান                 | ২৮। নৃত্যকলা                       |
| ৩। শ্রীমৎ বিবেকানন্দ স্বামীজীর জীবনের ঘটনাবলী            | ১৫। ভক্ত দেবেন্দ্রনাথ                              | ২৯। বিবিধ কবিতাবলী                 |
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| ৫। কাশীধামে স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ                            | ১৭। ব্রহ্মানন্দ ও রামকৃষ্ণ মিশন                    | ৩১। প্রাচীন জাতির দেবতা ও বাহনবাদ  |
| ৬। অজাতশত্রু শ্রীমৎ স্বামী ব্রহ্মানন্দ মহারাজের অনুধ্যান | ১৮। মাস্তার মহাশয়ের অনুধ্যান                      | ৩২। দৌত্যকার্য                     |
| ৭। মহাপুরুষ শ্রীমৎ স্বামী শিবানন্দ মহারাজের অনুধ্যান     | ১৯। গুপ্ত মহারাজ (স্বামী সদানন্দ)                  | ৩৩। পাণ্ডপত অস্ত্রলাভ (কাব্য)      |
| ৮। তাপস লাটু মহারাজের অনুধ্যান                           | ২০। মাতৃদ্বয় (গৌরী মা ও গোপালের মা)               | ৩৪। উষা ও অনিরুদ্ধ                 |
| ৯। শ্রীমৎ সারদানন্দ স্বামীজীর জীবনের ঘটনাবলী             | ২১। নিত্য ও লীলা (বৈষ্ণব দর্শন)                    | ৩৫। খেলাধূলা ও পল্লীসংস্কার        |
| ১০। জে. জে. গুডউইন                                       | ২২। বদরীনারায়ণের পথে                              | ৩৬। বৃহন্নলা                       |
| ১১। শ্রীমৎ স্বামী নিশ্চয়ানন্দ মহারাজের অনুধ্যান         | ২৩। প্রাচীন ভারতের সংশ্লিষ্ট কাহিনী                | ৩৭। মায়াবতীর পথে                  |
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### মহেন্দ্রনাথ প্রসঙ্গে গ্রন্থাবলী

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| ১। স্মৃতি তর্পন - প্যারীমোহন মুখোপাধ্যায় | ২। পুণ্যদর্শন মহেন্দ্রনাথ প্রসঙ্গে - সত্যচরণ দত্ত | ৩। বিবিধ প্রসঙ্গে মহেন্দ্রনাথ - মানস প্রসূন চট্টোপাধ্যায় |
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W.B. India cell no.: 9830439224 9874725737 9831752901



*We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.*

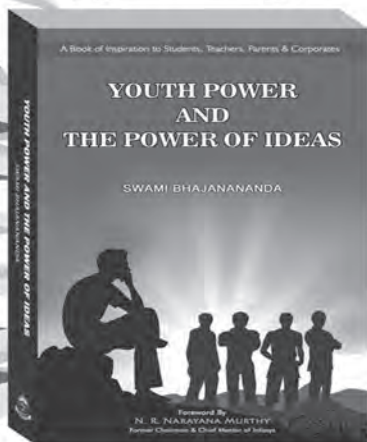
*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

*Swami Vivekananda*



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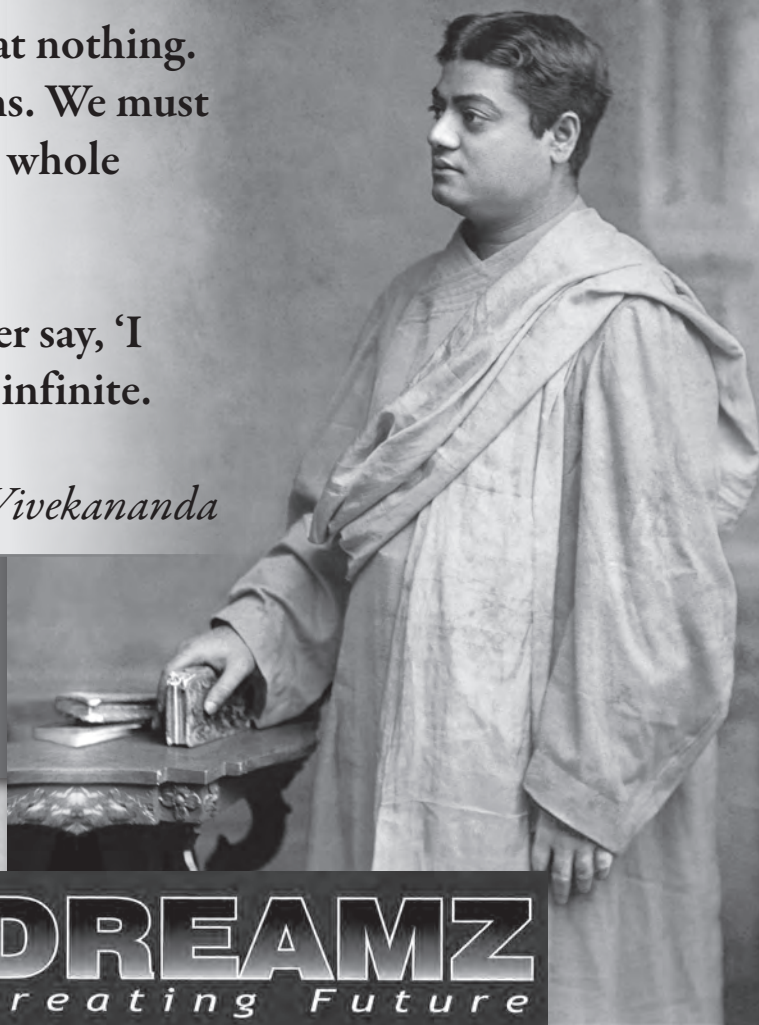
Each soul is potentially divine.  
The goal is to manifest this  
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is  
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.  
You will be like lions. We must  
rouse India and the whole  
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I  
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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Yours in the lord

**Swami Sarvatmananda**  
Secretary

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In religion, as in all other matters,  
discard everything that weakens  
you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda

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